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THROUGH A NEEDLE'S EYE.

CHAPTER I.

HERFORD COURT.

HERFORD was one of the little seaboard parishes which encircle England; each one containing its small, gray, storm-beaten church, perched on a crag overgrown with ivy and moss, or built low down on the shore, with the moan of the sea sounding incessantly round the graves of the dead. The village of Herford consisted of a straggling street of fishermen's houses, stretching in a single line from the shore inland, with scattered cottages and humble farmsteads dotted about the slopes on each side of the deep valley running down to the sea. There was no pier, and there were no lodging-houses. The nearest post town was five miles off by the nearest road—a rough and wind-swept path over the cliffs—and seven full miles if you traversed the whole length of the valley in order to reach the highway.

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In every season of the year hedgerow flowers were to be found in bloom in Herford, for the valley lay open to the south, and the soft mist-laden south wind alone could breathe freely along it. There was neither biting cold in winter, nor scorching heat in summer; and the noisy, narrow rivulet, which sang and played all down its winding curves, was never parched up by drought, and but seldom overflowed its deep banks. The bay where it emptied itself had a small ridge of pebbly beach, beyond which lay a tract of firm, bright sand, stretching in a narrow belt for miles under the cliffs when the tide was out. Almost every man in the village owned some small boat of his own, for the railway was as far off as Lowborough, and the inhabitants of Herford preferred launching their rude, safe fishing craft, and running round with the tide, to traveling along the dusty, hot highway, whenever they had any of the produce of their fields or their nets to dispose of.

The whole parish, almost to a single field, was the property of one landowner, old Richard Herford, of Herford Court; whose ancestors had dwelt there for many generations, gradually rising from the position of farmer to that of gentleman, and as gradually adding field to field, until the whole of the parish, with the small living attached to it, had come into their hands. The old man now in possession was past eighty. He had been cast in a somewhat rougher mould than his immediate forefathers, and instead

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of taking any part in the affairs of the county, had led a homely, rustic life, fishing in his own boat, farming his own fields, and ruling his tenants, both farmers and fishermen, with a high hand. He had not married till late in life, and when his only son and heir was born he was already sixty years of age—a strong-willed, selfish man, neither able nor willing to learn any lesson disagreeable to his egotism. He idolized his boy, the son of his old age, but he did not suffer this idolatry to interfere with the supreme worship of himself. He could not have more perfectly succeeded in ruining his son by indulgence if he had set that end before him as a definite aim. Master Dick, as he was called by all the village, grew up wild, ignorant, and reckless; a torment to the men, and a terror to the women of the place. He would not go to school, and the tutors provided for him at home found him unmanageable and incorrigible; but were laughed at or scorned by his father if they made any complaint against him. "The boy can always be managed by me," he said.

Mrs. Herford, who was more than thirty years younger than her husband, had been a widow with one child when she married a second time. Until this marriage her life had been spent in large towns, chiefly in London, amid the constant bustle and stir of a populous community. She had been fascinated by the seclusion and quiet of Herford, and fancied a perpetual peace must reign there. Moreover, she

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was a penniless widow, dependent upon relations who kept her grudgingly; and her young son was a heavy burden to her. She was not fit to maintain herself, or at least thought so. She had never been willing to work steadily, or to do anything that might be at the moment irksome to her. When old Richard Herford had unexpectedly asked her to become his wife, she had consented with alacrity, believing that henceforth she would have her own way in everything. "Better be an old man's darling than a young man's slave," she had said to herself. But as soon as her child was born she was set on one side, and treated, even with regard to his training, as a complete cipher; being hardly more than the housekeeper of Herford Court, which from that epoch became the kingdom of the son and heir of Herford.

Justin Webb, her elder boy, was ten years of age when his half-brother was born. He was already a thoughtful, advanced lad, prematurely wise from knocking about in the world during the homeless years of his mother's widowhood. He was old enough to feel a sharp pang of resentment at her second marriage; a step which throughout his whole after life he never fully forgave. But the change was attended with many advantages to him. Old Richard Herford was not unkind to the fatherless boy, and in a rough fashion of his own he tried to make a man of him. He succeeded in training the town-bred lad into a capital sailor, and a still better farmer. The

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quiet, beautiful country life won all Justin's affections, which had so little else to cling to. The bright, changeful sea, never bearing the same aspect long; the dangerous cliffs, which he soon learned to scale with the most venturesome of the village urchins; the wild slopes of the deep valley, with their elegant birch-trees, and ferns, and flowers, that lived all the winter through; the large, well-stocked farmstead adjoining the Court; the Court itself, with its low, wainscotted rooms, and long, dark lobbies, and high-roofed attics set in the gables; all these took almost the place of human friendships, and awoke in his heart the strong, deep love which no one about him cared to cherish. It was a heart-breaking trial to Justin when he was banished from Herford to a school in London.

But the boy distinguished himself at school, having one object before him—that of quickly learning all he had to learn, so as to get back to his beloved Herford. He won prize after prize, bringing them home at each holiday, with a secret sense that nobody really cared for his success. His master urgently represented to his stepfather that he merited an university education, and old Richard Herford consented to it, reflecting that the present vicar of Herford was an old man, and that the living was in his gift. It would probably be the cheapest and best way of providing for his wife's son. Justin cared for nothing so much as coming back to Herford. The old vicar died opportunely, and he succeeded him, having a

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few months before married the daughter of one of his former masters. Thus, at twenty-four years of age, he settled down for life as vicar of Herford-on-the-Sea.

There had been no great love between the half-brothers. Each regarded the other with contempt; Justin after a quiet fashion, Richard after an ostentatious one. The old man was roughly good-natured to his stepson, but he idolized his heir. Mrs. Herford favored sometimes one, and sometimes the other, according to the caprice of the moment; but her whims were of no weight with any of the three men belonging to her, over whom her shallow and fickle nature had no influence. The parishioners, with the exception of four or five scampish young men, suspected of poaching, petty larcenies, and similar misdemeanors, were all strongly attached to Master Justin, the quiet, pleasant lad who had grown up among them, and who was now their own young, friendly parson, not over strict, and not too long in his sermons. Master Richard had grown up among them also, but he was headstrong and domineering, and there was a secret dread of his succession to the estates, which could not be very far off now, and which was looked forward to as a great though inevitable calamity to the whole parish.

As might have been foreseen, as soon as Richard was but little more than a boy, his strong, uncurbed will came into frequent collision with the strong, un-

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curbed will of his aged father. Old Richard Herford grew more obstinate and tyrannical as he advanced in years, and began to sink under the infirmities of his great age. His increasing deafness and dimness of sight made him increasingly suspicious and unreasonable. On the other hand, his son could not submit to any control, and it was enough for him to know that his father had forbidden a thing, to cause him ardently to desire to do it. Time after time violent quarrels arose, in which Justin played the part of peace-maker, the old man being always more readily pacified than his son. But there could be no lasting peace between them. Threats were constantly bandied to and fro; on the one hand of disinheritance, on the other of running away, and never more being heard of. At length young Richard put his threat into execution. When he was little over eighteen he disappeared suddenly and completely, and no inquiry or search availed to procure a solitary trace of him. Some of the fishermen whispered that he must have been seized with cramp whilst bathing, and been carried away by the tide; but there was no evidence to support this suggestion, and it did not receive a moment's credence at the Court. Old Richard Herford knew, though he never betrayed the secret, that a large sum of money had disappeared from the cabinet in his bedroom at the same time as his hopeful son.

Two other events had checkered the somewhat monotonous life of the young vicar of Herford—

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the birth of a little daughter, and the death, a few months later, of his wife, who was some years older than himself, and who might be said to have chosen and married him, rather than he her. Both of these events took place three or four years before Richard's disappearance.

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CHAPTER II.

OLD RICHARD HERFORD.

IF it were possible for us to take our last journey as we take other journeys, half the terror of it would be gone. We shrink more perhaps from going alone than from entering into an utterly unknown state of existence. Could we only say to one or two of our dearest, most familiar friends, "Come, I will bid good-by to this world next week if you will go with me. Let us hasten to that better land, of which we have so often spoken, and so often heard, in our hours of sorrow," then we might set about our preparations for that great migration with an unusual courage and cheerfulness, as if we were merely flitting to some new home across the seas. But we are called to pass singly to that far-off, mysterious shore in darkness and silence, hearing nothing, seeing nothing, knowing nothing. Against our will we are stripped of all our customary surroundings, even of the outer self, so much better known to most of us than the hidden, lonely, living soul, which alone has to pass the unseen boundary. It is not change that daunts us; it is the utter, absolute strangeness of that future world, and of our place and bearing in it.

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The extreme age of old Richard Herford, standing on the brink of the grave one January night, did not make the strangeness of the change less painful to him. He had lived so long in this life that the brief, fleeting visions one catches now and then of another world must long since have ceased to visit him, if, indeed, they had ever visited him at all. The curtain had become darker and more closely drawn between him and the world to come. He was clinging with fierce tenacity to the worn-out, half paralyzed frame which had been his tenement so long. If he might have his will, he would rather remain thus, bed-ridden and barely alive, than venture into the thick darkness he was about to enter. His white head tossed to and fro on his pillow, and he groaned impatiently. How poor and short a time it was since he was a boy! It did not seem long since he was a lad scrambling up Halstone Cliff, and hanging by strong young hands to any jutting crag, or root of ivy, whilst the tide roared far below him against the rocks. He had been dreaming a good deal of his boyhood of late, going back to the smallest memories of childish trifles. Was it a token that his worn-out, sickly spirit was about to enter into some new youth?

There was no trace of youth in his withered, yellow face, or in the hands, with their hooked and shriveled fingers clutching the bed-clothes higher up his shoulders. It was difficult to believe that such decrepit old age had ever known childhood. Bleared

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and sunken eyes looked out dimly and anxiously from under his bushy eyebrows. They could not rest upon an object that had not been familiar and unchanged to them for many years. This chamber, which had been his own for more than seventy years, in which he had slept and waked night and morning, was less altered than he was himself. There was the same old carved cabinet where his father, and his grandfather before him, had kept their deeds and papers of value; the same looking-glass which had reflected his own face since it was the smooth, beardless face of a boy; the same windows looking out upon the old unchanged landscape. Was it possible that he was really going to quit all the old possessions, never to return to them; his home, which had grown so much a part of himself that he could not conceive of life of any kind apart from it? Would he never see the sun rise again through the eastern window? Nay, would the sun rise at all, or the dawn break through gray clouds upon that unknown world? Would there never more be a farm for him to ride over? No fishing or hunting? No tides flowing and ebbing? No dinners and suppers? No long nights of unbroken sleep? His face had been turned to the wall for a minute or two, but at these dread questions he tossed over again on his pillow, and gazed out with a troubled gleam in his eye, looking for comfort to the faces of his wife and stepson.

They were sitting on the hearth together, talking

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in so low a tone that the old man's deaf and jealous ear could not catch a word, though he lay quite still, and listened eagerly. They did not glance towards him, and he felt neglected and aggrieved. Already they were drifting away from him; he was losing his power over them. His own forlorn loneliness smote him more painfully, as he watched them, their heads almost touching each other, as they continued their earnest conversation. They were discussing some plans and schemes with which he could not interfere. There would be no more planning and scheming for him. There was no more for him to do in the world—except one thing.

"Justin!" he cried, so sharply and loudly that it made them both start and hurry towards the bed. "I must speak to you alone. Send your mother away till I want her."

"Can I do nothing for you before I go?" she asked kindly, for she had been a good nurse to him, and was willing to do her duty by him to the last.

"No; just do as I bid you. You never do as you're told," he answered peevishly.

Without a word she walked quietly out of the room. Justin stood still, looking down thoughtfully on the dying old man. There was not much affection in his steadfast gaze, though there was some sadness and sympathy; but he waited in silence, as if used to his stepfather's querulous temper, and the dim mournful eyes of the old man were fastened upon him.

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"I am going fast," he said sorrowfully.

Justin neither contradicted nor reassured him. He knew that this was old Richard Herford's last day—perhaps his last hour. He held his peace even from good words, for he knew how quickly the old spirit of tyranny and opposition was aroused.

"I was nearly sixty when my son was born," he went on, "and my head was white as snow. Neighbors called me an old man then, but I felt like a lad. Ay! it was like being a lad again to have Dick all in a frolic about me. He was a bolder, a merrier lad than thee. 'Justin was born to be a parson, with no spirit in him,' I said; and Dick was born to be a roistering squire. Dick could never have turned out a milksop."

"He was very brave and bold," said Justin in a soothing tone.

"I doted on every hair of his head," he moaned; "it's cruel of him to forsake his old father—cruel and thankless. I have cursed him hundreds of times for it. How long is it since he went away, and we've never heard a word of him, good or bad?"

"Four years last September," he answered.

"Four years last September! And the rascal knows I'm over eighty-three! He doesn't care to see his old father's face again. Yet I was very good to him. You've been more like a son to me, Justin, though there's not a drop of my blood in your veins. I've all along said you were like a son to me,

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and I swore to make you a son in my will. All the neighbors know that. 'Justin Webb shall be my heir, and take the name of Herford,' I've said wherever I went. 'I'll cut the runaway off with a shilling,' I've said, and he deserves it. All the country knows. 'If he isn't at home before I die, he shall rue it,' I've said. Church, market, and everywhere, I've said the same words. Ought I to stick to them, Justin? Would God Almighty be angry if I broke my word? Is there aught in the Bible about keeping fast by one's bitter curses?"

He had raised himself upon his pillows, and stretched his yellow, shriveled face towards Justin, with a passion of anxiety in every line of it. A vehement struggle was going on in his mind. He dared not, on the very threshold of the unseen world, commit any fresh offence, that might endanger his own welfare there; yet he could not bear to keep his bitter threats against his only son. It was a moment of fierce inward conflict with Justin also. He knew well that Richard had been disinherited, and he himself put in his place, and all his future depended upon his next word. Yet he stood there as a minister of Christ to teach the dying man all he would receive of divine truth.

"On the contrary," he said distinctly and slowly, "God requires of you to forgive every one that has trespassed against you. It is your bounden duty to pardon your son."

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"Ah, I do, I do!" cried the old man with a sudden burst of tears and sobs. "Oh, I forgive him! I love him! I dote upon him still, Justin! He must be my son again. I believe now in God Almighty, if He orders me to forgive my own son. I was afraid I must stick to my word and my curses. Oh, God bless you, Dick! my boy, my son!"

He had fallen back upon his pillows, and lay shaking with sobs. Justin's face was pale and set as he waited for this paroxysm to pass over. "Forgive, and ye shall be forgiven," he said, after a painful effort to speak clearly. "'For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.' 'Be ye kind one to another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, even as God, for Christ's sake, has forgiven you.'" Justin felt as if he was reading the words of some solemn sacrament. Death had not yet lost its sacred mystery for him.

Old Richard Herford lay still for a quarter of an hour to recover his strength for further speech, after his fit of sobbing was over. But Justin did not move away. He stood with his arms folded and his head bowed down, waiting in profound patience for the next word of the dying lips, though the pause seemed intolerably long.

"Justin," he said at last, opening his dim-sighted eyes, "you know I made a will after Dick ran away, making you my son. It's in the old cabinet there, and my will when he was born, leaving it all to him.

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I meant to burn the new one the very day he came home again; but he's never come! Here's the key; bring them both to me. I'll burn it now, because I've forgiven him from the bottom of my heart, for he's my only son, born when I was sixty years of age; and why should I leave what I've got to another man's son?"

He muttered the last words to himself; but Justin's ear caught every one of them. He found the key mechanically, and unlocked the cabinet door. In a drawer within lay two packets, tied and sealed. His hand shook a little as he took them out, and he dropped them hastily on the old man's bed, as though the very touch of them was a pain to him. With crooked, palsied fingers the dying father took them up, and looked at them through his bleared eyes. "Call your mother in," he said sharply and suspiciously. Justin hastened to the door and called aloud, without leaving the room. She was not far away, and the next moment she was standing by her husband's bed.

"Take this packet," he said to her, "and drop it in the fire, and let me see it burn away to a cinder. Justin, you put this one back in its safe place. That's my last will, and you can testify I'm of sound mind."

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CHAPTER III.

THE MASTER OF HERFORD.

IT was four o'clock in the morning when Justin left Herford Court to return to his own home. Old Richard Herford was dead, and his death had been a depressing one, so completely had the selfishness of his nature displayed itself, even in the solemn hour of passing away. A stormy wind was driving the thin clouds hurriedly across the sky, where the waning moon shone out now and then with a fitful and watery light. He could not see the sea along the deep lane he was treading, with tall hedgerows on each side; but the moan of it filled the silent air of the night, mingling with the rush of the wind through the leafless trees overhead. There was no other sound except his own lingering and tardy footsteps. He turned round, and stood longer than he was aware of, gazing at the gabled front of the Court, which stood on the brow of a low rocky hill, with the sheltering cliffs behind, its high roof and strong stacks of chimneys looking black in the fitful moonlight. He knew every stone of the pile of building. It had been the only home he had ever known, though he had had but a stepson's place in it. He had never forgiven his mother for marrying old Richard Herford; but

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he had long ago acknowledged the advantages that had accrued to him because of it. But were they real advantages? he asked himself at this moment. Mr. Herford had given him a college education, and bestowed upon him the small living in his gift. He had drifted into taking orders and becoming a clergyman, because his stepfather, with his strong and domineering will, had so ordered it. But who could tell him what he might have become, by his own exertions, had his mother remained a poor widow?

His heart felt very sore as he stood gazing at the black gabled roof of the Court. He had just been passing through a vehement struggle with a strong temptation; and his victory, so far from making him feel triumphant, had left him depressed and disappointed. He had wished in his inmost heart that it had not fallen to his lot to impress upon the conscience of the dying man the duty of pardoning his graceless son. He had seen the will destroyed which would have made him master of the estate, Herford of Herford, in the place of his half-brother. It had been promised to him scores of times, with many an oath; and although he had always disclaimed the promise, even to himself, the hope had unconsciously sprung up in his heart that some day the old place, so dear to him and so little cared for by Richard, might become his own.

It was true that he had been a better son to the old man than Richard had ever been. He had worked

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for him, submitted to him, carried out his schemes, and waited dutifully upon his whims year after year, whilst Richard had acted like the spoiled scapegrace that he was. He had mocked at his father, assiduously opposed him in his plans, done his best to supplant him, and at last deserted him in his old age; yet now Richard was to come into the kingdom, be the young squire, and squander away the money his father had accumulated, simply because he had been born to it, whilst he who had acted the better part must go back, for the remainder of the long life stretching before him, to the small vicarage and scanty stipend of his seaboard parish. Until now he had not felt deeply discontented with his position, but he had not known before how much he was unconsciously building upon his stepfather's reiterated promises. It was still three hours before the break of day, yet he felt reluctant to go home and wake up his elderly maidservant to admit him into his cheerless house. It was better out here in the stillness of the night, for there was no sleep possible whilst thoughts were hurrying faster than the flying clouds overhead through his wakeful brain. He could hardly confess to himself that his mood was anything more than the depressing and weary sadness of witnessing the passing away into impenetrable mystery of an utterly selfish and unenlightened soul. Slowly he turned his back upon Herford Court, and slowly he paced the long deep lane which led down to the little fishing

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village, where every house was closed and no sign of life was to be seen. The cottages were all real homesteads to him, every one of whose inmates he had known from boyhood; and now that he was their pastor, he was not willfully neglectful of his duties to them, distasteful as they were to him. Justin delighted in dwelling amongst people whom he knew closely. Possibly the absence of any strong home affection had made him more dependent upon the good will of the outer circle of neighbors. He was very popular with his parishioners, though few of the rough men could overcome their reluctance to attend the church, which they were accustomed to look upon as a safe and warm shelter for women folk, and for such among themselves as had grown too rheumatic to brave all weathers on the beach.

From this little strip of shingly beach, where the boats were now lying above high-water mark, a narrow and somewhat dangerous path wound upwards, round the face of a rock that stood well out to sea, on the highest point of which stood a little lighthouse. Long ago, in some far-away dark age, it had been a small chapel or chantry belonging to an abbey some miles inland; and it looked still like a diminutive church, with its low porch and dwarf square belfry, which now held the lantern burning brightly towards the sea. Justin knew very well that this spot was the favorite haunt of his seafaring parishioners on a Sunday, and he felt no wonder or resentment at it.

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It was dark, for the faint ray of the waning moon hardly touched the glistening whiteness of the foam as the sea roared and broke into flecks upon the rocks below; and he could scarcely trace the black outline of the cliff stretching on each side of the Lantern Hill, as it was called. But he had no need to see the familiar prospect. He could name every crag and headland on either side; and as the strong westerly breeze blew the spray into his face, he knew almost to a foot how high the tide had risen on the jagged rocks beneath him.

He sat down on a rude seat under the lighthouse tower, turning a sad set face to the dark sea. Why, he asked himself at this moment, had he suffered himself to be over-persuaded by his mother and coerced by his stepfather, and drifted by circumstances into entering the Church? His heart was not in his work. He discharged his duties conscientiously, and would not willfully omit one of his obligations; but they were a weariness, not a delight, to him. His desire was for other pursuits. When the men about him talked of their fishing and farming, their horses and their boats, he could enter easily and cordially into their interests; but when they were dying, and looked to him to give them comfort and counsel for their souls, he was at a loss. He had found himself tongue-tied and embarrassed at his stepfather's death-bed. It ought not to have been so. Perchance if he had been himself a more devout and spiritual man, he

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might have awakened some answering emotion in the departing spirit, and it would have passed into another world with less of earth's ignorance and hardness about it. He felt bowed down by his sense of unfitness for his office. There had been times before this when the same wretched despondency had breathed over him, but now he had fallen into a dark and deep degree of it. If he had been what he ought to be as a minister of Christ, would his stepfather have gone from this life in so dense an ignorance of the character of God, and the nature of the revelation Christ had come to bring?

But irksome as the yoke was he must bear it. There had been a half-dream in his mind of giving up his living to his old friend Cunliffe, if the estate should ever come to him. It amazed and shamed him to discover how active had been his anticipations of supplanting his half-brother; yet what freedom there would have been in it for himself! How well he could have filled the offices of owner and master, squire and magistrate! Richard would do mischief in each of these positions—Richard, the ignorant, reckless spendthrift, as selfish as his father, with low habits bordering on vices. Justin had always despised Richard while he envied him. He had continually drawn comparisons between them, and in all these comparisons his own character and conduct stood out well; yet Richard was to be master of Herford!

At last Justin roused himself from his long revery,

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stood up shivering, and lifted his soft cap from his head, to let the keen sea-breeze cool his throbbing temples. The thoughts that had passed through his mind he could utter to no man; and he must guard himself against entertaining them again, even as passing guests. It was a poor man's life he was going back to, doomed to it for the remainder of his days; for if Richard came into unconditional possession it was little help his mother would get from her younger son, and she would become an additional burden upon him. Two hundred a year was the full value of his little living. Poverty had not yet looked in through his window, for old Richard Herford's pride would not have brooked the idea of any one belonging to him being in low condition; but now Richard was master he would spend all on himself in riotous living. His stepfather's last coherent words haunted him as he retraced his way homewards: "Justin has always been a good son to me; I wish I'd done something for him, but it's too late now."

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CHAPTER IV.

PANSY.

JUSTIN'S vicarage was built in the shadow of the church—a small, low house, not much better than the best of the village dwellings; yet such as it was he had been content with it until his younger brother disappeared, and his stepfather ostentatiously and continually proclaimed him heir to Herford Court. Since then he had, unawares to himself, looked upon it as a merely temporary abode which answered his purpose well enough till he could move into a larger habitation. Now it must be his home for life, for Justin had no desire to quit Herford, for which he felt an almost passionate love, and no ambition apart from his beloved village tempted him. He had never left it as a boy without suffering from that strange malady, half physical and half mental, which we call home sickness; and to be banished from it altogether would have seemed to him like tearing up his life by the roots.

He looked up expectantly to the small window of the closet adjoining his own study, where his motherless child slept, and which he could enter with quiet footfall any moment of the long evenings he often

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spent alone, and mark every change on the sweet rosy face asleep on the little bed. He was not disappointed, for Pansy was already up and dressed, and was watching for him, with her face pressed close against the window. She ran down swiftly, and he heard her fingers busy at the fastenings of the door, which were but slight ones, for no one feared house-breakers in Herford. There was no lack of warmth in Pansy's welcome. She pulled down his sad face to hers and covered it with kisses.

"How I've missed you, father!" she said. "Why did you stay away from me all night? I got up so early to see if you wouldn't come. I was going to run up to grandpapa's after you, if you hadn't come soon."

"Pansy," he said solemnly, "I was watching with your grandfather till he went away from us all."

"Where is he gone?" she asked in an earnest, emphatic tone.

Justin was silent as he drew his little daughter into the homely room where his breakfast was being laid. What could he say in reply to the important question we ask of each one that passes away from our sight and ken? He had hitherto been so much occupied with his own position that the thought of the old man's destiny had barely touched his mind. No one knew him as well as he did, no man was better fitted to pronounce upon his doom; but Justin's heart sank within him as he vainly tried, for an

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instant, to follow the journey his stepfather had taken since he had left his questioning little daughter.

"He is gone to his own place," he murmured half aloud.

"Is it a pleasant place?" asked Pansy. "Is it where you'd like us two to go, father?"

"God forbid!" he answered hastily, pressing the child closer to him; "my darling, your grandfather is dead."

"Like my poor mamma!" said Pansy, in a pitiful tone. "Never mind, father. I'll make up to you for him, as well as for poor mamma. Don't I make up for her to you?"

"Yes, my little girl," he answered tenderly.

"Are you very, very sorry he is dead?" she inquired again, after a little pause. She did not find that she felt very sorry. He was a yellow, toothless, rough-faced old man, with a mumbling voice, of whom she had been secretly afraid; though she had too much native sweetness and grace to shew it in any way. "Are you very sorry?"

"I am grieved," answered Justin, stroking his child's sunny curls, with as loving a touch as a mother's. For the first time he felt an emotion of grief for the old man; for his wasted life, so long in passing, and so solitary in its close. Could it be possible that he had possessed the same absorbing love for Richard which Pansy received from him? What poignant anguish must the forsaken father have un-

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dergone! What a sore spirit must he have carried about with him under his proud mien for many a past month! The only love that had ever reached the man's hard and selfish heart had pierced it through with many sorrows.

"You'll never be very grieved for long while I'm with you!" said Pansy wistfully.

"Why, no! How could I?" he replied, rousing himself from his mournful revery. If my little girl is very good, and very happy, I couldn't be sorry for long. Now give me my breakfast, little woman." It was an unfailing pleasure to him to see the flush of mingled anxiety and happiness that mounted to Pansy's face when she was employed in pouring out his coffee, the only part she could yet take in the management of the breakfast table. She was not tall enough to sit down to her task, and she stood at the tray, with a grave face puckered up into supernatural seriousness, as she carefully portioned out the cream and sugar, and poured out the hot coffee; breaking out into a triumphant little laugh as she placed the full cup in safety before him.

"There! You'll never pour out my coffee for me again," she said, "like you used to do when I was a little girl. Not if I never break any of the cups and saucers? Don't make believe I'm little again, please. I'm going to learn how to mend your stockings; and some day, when I am quite tall, I shall wash your surplices and iron them. I'm almost a

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woman now I think. Was it very cold and dark all night, father?"

"It was neither cold nor dark in your grandfather's room," he answered.

"Poor grandpapa!" said Pansy, in a voice of awe and pity; "did he know he was going away all alone? Did he want to stay here a little longer? Would grandmamma have gone with him if she could? He would have liked somebody to go with him."

"She would rather stay with us as long as she can," replied Justin.

"Father!" cried Pansy, running to him, and throwing herself in his arms, "if you were obliged to go away, I should want to come too. I should never, never like you to leave me behind. Didn't you want to go with poor mamma when God called her?"

"My little daughter," he answered, with soothing caresses, "we have no choice offered to us. Thank God, we are not called upon to choose whether we will go with those we love, or stay behind! God calls each of us when He sees it best; and none can refuse to obey, neither can we go till He calls."

"It is so strange and dreadful," sobbed Pansy, hiding her face on his breast, and clasping him more tightly in her arms.

"Why! how's this?" he said. "My little woman was quite merry a minute ago, and now she is crying her poor little heart away. Did you love your grandfather so much?"

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"I didn't love him enough," she faltered between her sobs; "if I'd only known I'd have tried to love him better. And now he'll never speak to me again; and he's gone alone by himself; and I'm afraid it's not a pleasant place, for you said God forbid you and me to go there. If I was there I'd ask God to let him go to a quiet room, where he could rest himself a little while, because he is so old; and he should have some very quiet angels to take care of him. Might I ask God for it? Perhaps it would not be too late yet."

"You may ask God for everything you wish," answered Justin soothingly. There could be no harm in teaching his child that: but he was reluctant to burden her young mind with any theory of the great mystery and tragedy which he had just witnessed. It came home to himself more closely than any death had done since his wife's, and had awakened a whole host of questions that slumber easily enough in the recesses of the brain so long as death passes by our own circle. He exerted himself to chase away the gloom on Pansy's face; and presently she was sitting again at the head of the table chattering almost gaily, though a suppressed sob now and then forced itself from her lips. Her father had soon to leave her to go again to Herford Court, and Pansy ran up-stairs to her little room to ask God to grant a very quiet place to her old grandfather.

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CHAPTER V.

READING THE WILL.

JUSTIN had to pass through the whole length of the village street before reaching the road which led up to Herford Court. The place was in an unusual stir and excitement, with groups of men and women standing here and there talking busily. Only the very oldest among them could remember the death of the last Herford of Herford, more than sixty years before; and the news that their old master had at last laid down the burden of his extreme age had shaken the village as with the shock of an earthquake. There was no other death that could come so closely home to all of them. They had neither loved nor respected him; but he had been their chief, with power in his hands which he could use for their welfare or injury. But it was not so much his loss, as the question who would succeed him that was agitating them, every one. There was scarcely a child among them who had not heard their dead master say that his runaway son should be cut off from his estates, and that his stepson should succeed to them. Now would come the confirmation of these oaths, if they had been genuine and true. But there was the doubt. Old Richard Herford had worshiped his son so

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openly, that it seemed incredible he could really leave him penniless and landless. The villagers were vehemently discussing this doubt when Master Justin, as they still called him, became visible in the street. He felt inclined to hurry past without speaking to these weather-beaten, hard-featured men and women; but they came thronging about him with the familiarity of long acquaintance.

"So th' old squire's dead and gone," said the parish clerk, a hale old man of eighty himself, "and we're all a-wondering who's to come after him up yonder. Please God, I say, as our Master Justin's made squire in his stead. That's what I'm looking for, please His holy will!"

"Nay, nay!" cried a loud shrill woman's voice, "Herford's been Herford time out o' mind. Master Justin 'll never be offended with such as we if we wishes a Herford to come into it; and there's none save Master Dick, as has been lost these four years."

"Well! we shall all see what we shall see," said the mistress of the dame-school, the only person in the village of whom Pansy stood in awe, "there's a providence in all things; and Master Justin's next to own son to the old squire; and he's almost a Herford. He'd get the queen's leave to change his name, so it would be all one."

"But it wouldn't be the old breed," objected the shrill voice.

"Th' old breed's a bad breed," interrupted a stur-

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dy fisherman; "we don't want Master Dick to lord it over us. I'm for Master Justin. Hurrah!"

"My good folks," shouted Justin, to get himself heard amid the din of contending voices, "as a matter of course my brother Richard will come into the estates; and no doubt he will quickly reappear now he is Herford of Herford. Some among you know his whereabouts, or I am very much mistaken."

"Not me," "nor me," cried a chorus of voices. "We want you to have it; you'd make a vast sight better squire than parson," cried out a strong voice after him, as he walked hurriedly on, "though we've nought to say agen you as parson, Master Justin. It's only my way of speaking."

Justin kept steadily on his way, the words ringing in his ears. He knew only too well that he did not and could not make a good parson; and that the rough, honest fellows about him knew it quite as well as he did. What was it that was so necessary to make him a true, efficient minister to the spiritual wants of this little community, so shut in and hedged round from the great world? They loved him heartily after their fashion, and looked up to him as the most learned and scholarly man in the place. They also looked up to him as one who could give them good counsel about their fields and their boats. There was not a fisherman among them who would not rather have him in his boat, on a stormy and dangerous sea, than any other man in the village. He was a leader

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among them in all things save one ; but that one was the very soul of the profession he had entered into. The moment he put on the garb of a clergyman he ceased to be their guide ; and knew himself to be the blind leading the blind. A fact they knew by instinct also.

As Justin drew nearer to the Court, and saw its quaint old-fashioned gray pile of building lying sheltered within its own curving brow of the cliff, these vexing thoughts died away, to give place to others as vexing. How would he be able to bear to see his brother leading a riotous, disreputable life within its walls; and probably in the course of a few years bring the old place to the hammer ? It had perhaps grown dearer to him since he had looked at it with the eye of a possible owner than it had been before; but it had always been an object of admiration to him. Richard was not fit to be master of it; yet he was left in absolute, unrestricted, immediate possession, as though destiny itself had decreed the speedy ruin of Herford Court.

The house seemed dark and dreary when he entered it. With a step that echoed noisily through the silent stone-paved hall, Justin crossed it to the door of the room where he knew he should find his mother. She was seated in a low, easy chair on the hearth in the darkened room, her face hidden behind the handkerchief she was holding up to her eyes. Though she was nearly fifty years of age she was

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still slim and almost girlish in figure; and her face, though there were a few lines on the forehead, and crow's-feet about the corners of the eyes, was nearly as round, and fair, and full, as when she had married a second time, twenty-five years ago. Justin stooped down to kiss her, with an unusual emotion of tenderness and compassion for his mother, once again a widow.

It was not probable that she could feel any profound grief at the loss that had just befallen her. Her husband, like any other man utterly wrapped up in self, had made her life a weariness and burden to her. The little love she might once have cherished for one who had taken her from poverty, and who was the father of her favorite son, had long ago been worn out. But she had not failed in the fulfillment of her duty towards him; partly, perhaps, because he had never released his claim upon it. She did not lift up her head when Justin kissed her; but she moaned a little, and rocked herself to and fro, as if bound to prove in this manner the depth of her affliction.

There was another occupant of the room, however, who hailed Justin's appearance with eagerness; an elderly man, short-sighted, and slightly deaf, who had been sitting sideways by the table, and strumming upon it with his fingers, in a perplexed and uncomfortable silence. He sprang up the instant the door opened, and shook hands hurriedly and warmly.

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"I'm here, Justin," he said. "I came over this morning to see if I couldn't persuade the old man to do right at last. So he's gone, and I'm too late! I was at him only a week ago, when I saw him last. Make another will, I said; and he swore he never would. Ah! well! we must all knock under, sooner or later, as I've been telling your mother. What is it in the service? There's only a step between us and old Herford. Susan is more overcome than I expected; but time, Justin, time will work wonders."

"Time has not worked many wonders for me yet, uncle," answered Justin. "Come, mother, we must attend to business now my uncle is here. There are a good many matters to arrange."

"I have no heart for business so soon," murmured the widow, from behind her handkerchief.

"Come, come, Susan!" said her brother sharply, "I cannot leave my business every day, I can tell you, to dance upon you. But I know quite well the provisions of your husband's will, and the directions he has left for his funeral; so we need not look to that. A handsome funeral it will be, I promise you, and will cost a mint of money. But there! he had a perfect right to do what he chose with his own."

"What is the date of the will?" inquired Justin, with a slight spasm of regret as he asked the needless question.

"We drew it up four years ago," answered his uncle, "and it was executed at once by the old squire.

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There! I'll say no more till after the funeral, unless you wish it opened and read at once."

"I do wish it," said Justin; "my mother and I know where it is to be found. Shall I fetch it here, or will you come with me to my father's room, and give a glance at it? It would be as well to see that he has made no change."

"Oh! bring it here," exclaimed his mother, in an impatient tone; "though I must say it seems an extraordinary thing to meddle with a man's will almost before the breath is out of his body. If my poor dear Richard was only here there would be no such haste; indecent haste it seems to me."

"If Richard was here he would be master," said Justin, speaking from a sore heart. He went away without another word, to the chamber where the corpse was lying. There were the peculiar hush, the blank stillness, and emptiness about it which always attend the dreary presence of death. It was a very familiar room to him, for old Richard Herford had not kept his wife's boy at a distance from him; yet to-day it seemed strange in the white dulled light entering through the shrouded windows. Not even the ashes of the fire were left upon the hearth, where last night he had watched the will consumed before his eyes, which would have made him master in the place of his prodigal brother. The stiff and straightened form of the dead man lay slightly outlined under the sheet that covered it. Justin paused for a minute at

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the foot of the bed, looking down upon it, his brain busy with retracing the past. This lapsed existence, which had had no link of blood relationship with his own, had yet been bound up with it in the most intimate connection. This man, with his dominant, overmastering will, had filled the position of a father to him; so far as authority constitutes a part of fatherhood. It was he who had placed him where he was, and chosen in a great degree his life for him; a bad choice, as Justin felt to the very core of his heart. There was not much grief in his absorbed contemplation of the lifeless form; this death was a release, though it could not undo the mischief he had done.

It could not give him back his youth, and a fresh entry upon manhood, with all its bright possibilities. "I forgive you!" he breathed softly; and a momentary moisture dimmed his eyes. With hushed and slow steps, as if fearful of disturbing the sleeper, he crossed the floor to the cabinet, and took from it the will he had deposited there the night before.

The cover bore the date of it on the front. It was twenty-two years back, a few months after the birth of old Richard Herford's son and heir. Justin read it half-aloud. How well he could recall the earlier years of his little brother's life, whilst he was still a young child like his Pansy! There had been no jealousy and contempt between them then. He almost felt a return of the old affection, and the sense of protectorship towards Richard. But he did not

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linger longer in the room. He carried the packet down-stairs, and placed it in his uncle's hands, who cut the ribbon that tied it, and broke the seal with a composure Justin could not share. He glanced at the date and signatures of the will.

"Ah! I see," he said, glancing up for a moment over his spectacles, "we drew it up, you know, from the old squire's instructions; and I was present when it was signed. Well, well! I wish I'd come yesterday. I did expostulate with him strongly at the time; but a willful man must have his way. He turned a deaf ear to all I urged on him. He would cut off Dick and make Justin his heir."

"Good heavens!" cried Justin. His brain whirled, and his senses seemed to be playing him false. He leaned over his uncle's shoulder and devoured the will with his eyes. The date was that of four years ago; the time when his father's anger raged most fiercely against Richard. Yielding to a sudden and almost unconscious impulse, Justin crushed up the cover which was lying on the table and thrust it in his pocket. He had not time to deliberate now; he must wait, and reflect, and decide. The lawyer, whose deaf ear was turned towards him, went on with his tranquil comments.

"Ah! no codocil," he said, "three hundred a year to Susan, and right of residence in Herford Court for her life; with a few legacies of no consequence. 'The whole of the residue, estate and personality, to

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my beloved stepson, Justin Webb, who shall take the name of Herford.' We valued it, two years ago, Justin, and reckoned it at over £1,200 a year, after Susan's £300 is deducted. And there are splendid openings for improvement, which old Herford talked of but never set about. There's Undercliff Cove would make a magnificent oyster-bed. By the way the squire has entailed the estate now; he will not let you be free to play such a high prank as he has. You and your heirs; eldest son, or daughter if you have no son. He was fond of little Pansy. But poor Dick is merely mentioned in the will to be cut off from the inheritance."

"Oh! my poor Richard! my dear boy!" cried Mrs. Herford. "It's a wicked will, Thomas; it must be set aside. Oh! my darling! my poor boy! Perhaps he made another will and had it somewhere. Let us go and look this minute."

"Ah! ay! he made another will," said Mr. Watson dryly; "we drew up a will for him when Richard was six months old, and I remonstrated strongly with him about that. We all but quarreled and parted over it. It was a very unfair will in my opinion; almost as bad, if not quite as bad, as this. He left absolutely everything to his son, without reserve and without condition. There was no provision whatever for you, Susan; you were left altogether dependent upon Dick. 'It will make her a good mother to him,' said the old Squire; 'she'll keep a civil tongue

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in her head if she's to look to him for her living.' You know what sort of a living you would get from Dick."

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Herford. "That was a more wicked will than this one. Why! Richard would soon make ducks and drakes of his money; and then where should I be! Justin will do what is right; everybody knows what Justin is. But my poor boy has always gone wrong, and no wonder, with such a willful, headstrong man for his father."

Now she knew the contents of her husband's first will, which she had burned with her own hands the night before, she felt quite reconciled to this later one. There would have been no hope for her if Richard had succeeded as uncontrolled master; but Justin had always been good, and steady, and dutiful to her and her husband. Besides she was independent of him and mistress of Herford Court. She turned to him and lifted up her face to kiss him.

"God bless you, Justin!" she said; "you'll make a better master than poor Richard. But I am sorry for him. Perhaps he'd have tried to be a good man, if he'd had a chance; but he'll never have a chance now." She sank down again in her chair and began weeping in more real earnest than before; partly with hysterical emotion, but partly with real genuine disappointment for her disinherited son. Justin had listened and looked on apart from them as if it was all a dream.

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"Mother," he stammered, "the estate is not mine. I ought not to take it from Richard."

"But what will you do?" asked his uncle sharply. "Old Herford had a right to leave it as he chose; and he left it to you. His last will was wiser than the first. Of course Dick is his own son; but he knew, and everybody knew, the lad would squander it away. What would £1,500 a year be to a youngster who would like to spend £15,000? As it is, if he should turn up again—and that's doubtful—you could do something handsome for him; or if he continues a reprobate, you could but keep him out of the gutter at least. Your father knew very well what he was about, you may be sure. When I expostulated with him at leaving Dick without a penny, 'Justin's a good man,' he said; 'he'll never see him starve. I wish he would!' he said, for he was awfully bitter against Dick. Then there's your mother. She has her three hundred a year to do what she likes with. It's a younger son's share, and as much as Dick deserves. Take your good luck, and thank Heaven for it. You'll make a better Herford than if you'd been born one."

"Of course he will," added his mother pettishly. "Oh! don't begin to harry us all with scruples and doubts. He always promised me my boy should be the same as his own, and he'd act by you as if you were; or else I never would have married him. You are the eldest son, and you're the heir."

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"Not old Richard Herford's heir," said Justin.

"Yes, you are," she persisted; "he's made you heir, and nobody can alter that. Good gracious! what would have become of me if he had told me to burn this will and keep the other?—with my own hands too! No provision for me! To think that he'd left me without a penny! I know I should have been compelled to live with you in that poky little vicarage, with nothing to live upon! But now I'm safe, and you are safe; and if Richard comes back we can do something for him. Thank God that first will was not to be! I should never have slept in my bed all these years if I'd had an idea what he had done."

It seemed to her as if she had just had a narrow escape from some dire calamity. The sword that had been hanging over her head was taken away; but she could see both the sword and the frail thread by which it had been suspended. She shivered and quailed at the mere thought of it. But with Justin she was safe. At last she would be mistress of Herford Court; the position she had married for, but had not gained. After the long, wearisome season of bondage were coming those gay, good times she had promised herself, when she became old Richard Herford's wife. She had chafed under a yoke more burdensome than Justin's. But at length the oppression had ceased, and the oppressor was gone. Already, though he had not been one day dead, she was ex-

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periencing the relief of freedom; and this was gathering strength now she knew she was provided for, and left dependent upon no one. She was thankful according to her nature; and when she left her brother Watson and Justin, she retired to her own room, and knelt down to return thanks for the provision made for her, before sending for her draper and dressmaker and entering upon the elaborate task of putting on weeds for old Richard Herford.

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CHAPTER VI.

RIGHT OR WRONG?

JUSTIN gave what orders were absolutely necessary, and then left the Court; having agreed with his uncle that the will should not be discussed again till after the funeral. He had kept his own counsel in the first moments of amazement and perplexity, and now he desired solitude and silence, to turn over the whole of the matter in his mind. He was like a man in a trance, unable to catch the end of any clear thread of thought, and unravel it from the vague confusion of his brain. After a while he found himself wandering aimlessly along the narrow, grass-grown path, which followed the crooked bends of the cliffs. The thick rain that had been sweeping across the country all day had spent itself at last, but the gray gloom of the sky and sea continued. The unbroken curve of the sea-line was of a dark leaden hue, and the rippleless water looked sulky and dull. The little birds, which were wont to sing at sunset, even through the winter days, were silent; and not a note was to be heard this evening except the wailing cry of the seagull flying inland. The light was dying away behind its thick gray veil of

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clouds, and the night was coming on swiftly and steadily. But Justin had neither eye nor ear for anything outside of himself. His brain was too busy to take note either of the weather or the hour.

There could be no doubt whatever that the will which had been destroyed was the very one old Richard Herford had intended to preserve. That was as clear as day. The old man's faculties, his sight especially, had been failing him for some months past; and he must, at some time, after reading his two wills, have enclosed them in the wrong covers. He had been too precise and clear in speaking of the one he wished to leave behind him for any mistake to be possible. On his death-bed he had forgiven his prodigal son, and revoked the will he had made in an hour of bitter anger against him. He had passed away in the belief that his only child would succeed to the possessions of his forefathers. It was a mere accident that had caused the former will to be destroyed and the later one to be preserved.

But was it right to call it an accident? Justin could not deny that it would be a grievous calamity to every other person involved in the matter, if not to Richard himself, for him to come into uncontrolled possession of the estate. There was barely a chance against his squandering it recklessly. To squander it meant that it would soon pass into the hands of strangers; while the very name of Herford of Herford would die away altogether from their ancient

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dwelling-place. Old Richard Herford, with his strong family pride, could never have meant that. He had made his first will when his heir was an infant in the cradle. To revert to that would be as much opposed to his real mind as that his stepson should succeed to the lands and take the name. He was keen-sighted enough to know the folly of leaving his son absolute master of the place. He had had two wills at variance within himself; and it was only in the hour of mortal weakness that his passion for his son had triumphed over his conviction that his old house and name would be sacrificed to his prodigality. Surely it was no accident, this slight mistake of a dim-eyed old man, which had been allowed by Providence. Justin did not use the name of God. Providence had permitted the half-childish father to enclose the papers in the wrong covers. Thus he had died more happily; like an over-indulged child who falls asleep with some dangerous tool in his hands, which is gently drawn away as the nerveless fingers lose their hold. There was no harm done. Power would be a dangerous weapon in Richard's hands; in his it would be an instrument of blessing to all about him. That was the right light to see it in. Providence had allotted the inheritance to the one who could make the best use of it. He had not had a finger in it himself. He had even urged his father to forgive Richard. It was his mother, the mother of both of them, who had burned the will; so that even the mere mechan-

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ism of the error had not been his. He was perfectly free, in will and act, of any plot to seize his brother's birthright. It had come to him.

What ought he then to do? He had no idea of what the law of the land would demand of him; and he hardly wished to know it. There had been no third person present during his conversation with his stepfather, and all must rest upon his word and testimony alone. If the law took his word, and gave up all to Richard, what would become of his poor mother? Her life had been a monotonous bondage for many years, and in her old age she would be cast upon the mercy of a careless and profligate son for the very bread she ate. No. It would be madness to throw away the responsibility laid upon him for the welfare of others, and for the maintaining the name and dignity of an old family. If he stood alone in the matter it would be quite another question. But was it not his bounden duty to keep silence and enter into possession of the estate?

He tore up into small pieces the cover, which bore no other writing than the words, "Richard Herford's Will, Sept. 14, 1835," and he watched the fragments floating slowly away on the light breeze. Then he felt some regret at having destroyed it; but why? There was nothing in the words, written though they were in the bold, large hand-writing of his stepfather. It was simply a slight corroboration of a fact he had decided to keep to himself.

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Yes. He would keep it to himself. He would do his utmost to find Richard; and if he came home reformed, indisputably reformed, giving proof of a radical change, and likely to be what the master of Herford ought to be, why, then, it would be his duty to relinquish the inheritance to him. And Justin felt sure he could fulfill that duty. He had never failed yet at the call of principle and honor. Let his younger brother come home a penitent prodigal, and he should have his father's lands, none the poorer for Justin's stewardship. He lifted up his bowed head and strode along more freely as he registered this vow. This was the right thing to do. Light was breaking on his path and making it clear to him. He would keep the whole matter to himself, and hold the estate in his own hand till he saw how Richard would turn out.

It was quite dark by the time he came to this conclusion, and he could no longer see the narrow and dangerous track he was following over the cliffs. The tide had turned, and was now booming like the roar of distant artillery against the black rocks strewn with seaweed five hundred feet below him. It would scarcely be safe even for him to return by the path he had come. He had left Herford Bay far behind him, and was nearing the edge of another and narrower valley, stretching inward from its own little cove. He could already see the lights scattered about the front of a large and wandering habitation, almost as familiar to him as Herford Court. With the exception of

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three or four servants' cottages, there was no other house in the little valley. Tenfold more lonely and still than Herford, these few homesteads must be surpassingly dreary and solitary in the night. The deep, hoarse baying of a ferocious watch-dog echoed through the silence, and was answered by only the monotonous thunder of the waves. There was an indescribable melancholy brooding over the place, and Justin paused in the darkness with his face turned towards it.

He knew very well it would look little less desolate and jail-like by daylight. The grounds and gardens about Rillage Grange were overgrown with nettles and docks; the gates were hanging upon rust-eaten hinges; there were breaches in all the moss-covered walls; even the outbuildings of the house were falling into ruins, and no man's hand had done a stroke of repairs to the dreary spot for years past. Squire Lynn was the reprobate of the neighborhood; a hard drinker, a gambler, and a scoundrel, who had been the destruction of Justin's younger brother, and the ruin of most of the men who had associated with him. Yet as he stood there in the darkness a smile stole across his face, though he sighed with a strong feeling of troubled tenderness rising in his heart.

"Would to God!" he said to himself, "that Diana was my wife at this moment. It would be good for her as well as for myself; and I could tell her what I can tell to no one else."

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CHAPTER VII.

IN DIANA'S PARLOR.

IN another quarter of an hour Justin was bidding the watch-dog be quiet, in a threatening voice that cowed the fierce animal; though he followed sniffing at the heels of the untimely visitor, and uttering a low growl as if ready to spring upon him at any moment. The front door of Rillage Grange had not been opened for years, and tall, strong plants of hemlock and mallow had grown in the chinks of the stone steps before it. But Justin was at no loss to find an entrance, without going through the large old kitchen, which had become the usual way of admission. There was a small side door sacred to Diana, which had always been open to him as long as he could remember, when he had brought messages as a boy from his stepfather to Squire Lynn. It was not locked, and he entered by it as one quite at home in the household. A long, dark passage, with a feeble oil lamp burning dimly at one end, lay before him, and he marched along it rapidly.

He knocked at the door of a room half-way along the passage, but there was no answer, and he went

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in after a moment's pause. It was an old-fashioned parlor, with a low carved ceiling, and wainscotted walls. The rooms in Herford Court were not unlike it; but here the furniture was still more faded and antique, and there was an air of poverty and of painful care-taking creeping over it. Yet it abounded in flowers and ferns, and these gave a brightness of color to the shabby room, which caught his eye pleasantly; though he hardly knew what pleased him, except that he was in Diana Lynn's parlor.

There was a fire burning cheerily on the hearth, and a lamp lit, though it was turned low, and shed only a very soft, subdued light through the place. Justin threw himself down into a large old chair, that was drawn up to the hearth, and felt all at once how worn-out and weary he was with the excitement of the last night and day. He closed his eyes, with a delicious sense of repose in the warmth and comfort of the fireside after his toilsome walk; and he did not hear Diana return to her room some few minutes later, and after a momentary start of surprise, stand looking at him with a quiet smile.

She carried a light in her hand, and it shone fully upon her face, which was somewhat too worn and thin for her age. It was a noticeable face, with its finely-cut features and low broad forehead. Her complexion was a clear cream-color, with no tinge of red except in her lips, while her eyes and hair were dark as night. Mrs. Fosse, the wife of old Jeremy

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Fosse, at Herford—a woman of few words, but of poetic instincts—said Miss Diana Lynn always made her think of the moonlight. An expression of care and sadness had grown habitual to her; but as she looked at Justin sleeping in her chair, a smile, mischievous yet shy, stole across her face. Her girlhood had passed, though a melancholy girlhood, for she was already four-and-twenty; and the reserve and stateliness of a somewhat self-contained, reticent womanhood was growing manifest in her. But just now, with her dark eyes glittering, and her lips melting into smiles, the dignity had given way to a very pleasant mirthfulness. If she laughed, her laughter would be low and sweet; but very few persons had ever heard Diana laugh.

She had scarcely paused there a minute when Justin became conscious of her presence, and started to his feet. Diana hastened forward to meet him, and offered her hand frankly, as to an old and intimate friend. He clasped it between both of his, and held it as he spoke quickly, though in a quiet voice.

"Diana, my father is dead!" he said.

"I have heard of it," she replied, with a grave look up into his face; "we heard of it this morning."

"And half an hour ago," continued Justin impulsively, "I was saying, would to God Diana was my wife!"

She withdrew her hand from his grasp, and sank down on the chair from which he had just risen.

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Her heart was beating tumultuously. Justin's well-known face bore the traces of violent agitation; and as she glanced up at him, keenly yet shyly, she could see how tremulous his lips were, and what trouble was in his eyes. He hardly looked as if he had come over the bleak cliffs that lay between them simply to declare his love for her.

"Forgive me!" he said, standing before her, and speaking appealingly, "I hardly meant to say that to-night; certainly I never meant to say it so abruptly. But I do love you, Diana, with all my heart; I want you. Now I have said it, against my better judgment, and almost against my will, what will you say to me?"

"Why is it against your better judgment, and against your will?" she asked.

"Because," he said regretfully, "if you will not be my wife, you will probably cease to be my friend. Don't I know I am almost, if not quite, your only friend? Your chief friend I have been. I comfort you and help you by coming here, to your miserable home. In one sense I protect you. And now if my hasty words raise a barrier between us, you will lose the full comfort of my friendship; and I shall lose you."

There was complete silence when he finished speaking. Diana had leaned her face on her hands; and he could see only the low, broad forehead, and the dark hair smoothly braided away from it, and gathered into a thick knot at the back of her small, shape-

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ly head. He broke the silence after a pause full of pain to him.

"I have done you no injury, Diana," he said in a broken voice, "but I wish I could call back those hasty words. If I tell you this once that I love you, I will never trouble you so again. I never loved a woman as I love you. I was little more than a boy when I married Pansy's mother; and you were only a child then. It is a man's deep, faithful love I feel now for you; and God knows you are dearer to me than anything else in the world; ay! almost dearer than Pansy herself, and she is more precious to me than words can tell. And oh! Diana, my love for her would never clash with my love for you."

"Why did you never tell me before?" she asked in a whisper.

"Why do I tell you now?" he returned. "Because I feel like a leaf tossed to and fro; because all my life is being uprooted. I spoke in spite of myself; I had no intention of speaking of it. I only meant to come in and look at you, and hold your hand in mine for a moment, and listen to your sweet, quiet voice. I should have gone back again to my duty, feeling I had both gained and given strength. And now, like a fool, I've cut down my own poor little gourd. Diana, you will never forget this."

"No, I can never forget it," she murmured.

He was still standing before her, looking miserable

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and dejected. His long, dark tramp over the rough and wet paths, that had brought him to her, had given him a weather-beaten aspect, while his want of sleep and profound conflict with difficulties, known only to himself, had already marked his face with a worn and anxious expression. She lifted up her dark eyes to him, with a strange, soft light beaming in them, and her lips melted again into a tender smile.

"I do not wish to forget it," she said very quietly. "I have always loved you, Justin."

"I cannot believe it," cried Justin on his knees beside her, and holding her hands in his, that he might see her face, and read there whether she was mocking him or not; "tell me again, Diana. Did you say you had always loved me?"

"Why!" she said in a pleasant whisper, "who else was there? Ever since I was a little girl I've loved nobody else. You were always so good to me, Justin; and so good to every one. You are the best man I know; the best in the whole world to me. There has never been any other to me."

He could scarcely catch the last words, though her lips were so close to his ear. But as she uttered them a noisy and peremptory ring resounded through the silent house, which till that moment had seemed empty; and immediately afterwards a man's loud voice shouted impatiently along the echoing passages,

"Di! come here, Di! This moment!"

"It's my father," she exclaimed, springing up hastily,

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"I must go at once. You will not see him to-night, Justin? No; go home and rest. Good-by, my dear."

Her voice lingered a little over her farewell; but she was gone before he could answer, and he heard her swift, light step speeding along the passage, in obedience to her father's boisterous summons. He had often heard both the call and the obedient footstep before, but he had never felt chafed to the degree he did to-night. For a moment or two he stood irresolute whether to follow her into Squire Lynn's unwelcome presence, or obey her parting injunction to go home, and seek the rest which was becoming imperatively necessary. He opened the door, and caught the sound of rude laughter and loud voices issuing from the dining-room at the other end of an intersecting passage. It would be mere folly and exasperation to himself to face the riotous merriment of the half-drunken man; so quietly letting himself out by the side-door through which he had entered, he passed again into the darkness of the night.

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CHAPTER VIII.

DIANA'S DECISION.

DIANA opened the dining-room door, after hurrying away from Justin, to obey her father's call. He was still sitting at the dinner-table, with two visitors from Lowborough, who had dropped in since Diana had left her father alone after dinner. Squire Lynn's habits were well known, and it was seldom that he was without some chance companions to wile away the tedious hours until after midnight. It was his boast that he could drink as much as any man in the county if he might choose his own time for it, and begin only after having fortified himself with a good dinner; and there were few drinking men in that, or the neighboring counties, who had not tried their powers with him.

He was still a handsome, fine-looking man under sixty, with the same clear-cut features as his daughter. Till the last few years there had been a marked likeness between them, to the very poise of the shapely head, and the erectness of the supple and slender figure. But Squire Lynn's head was less erect, and his shoulders were more bent than they had been. His face had taken an unhealthy hue, and

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his eyes, which had been as clear and deep as Diana's, had grown bloodshot. At this moment he was at that stage of intoxication, when the most trivial or the most solemn incident alike provokes an uproarious laugh. As Diana opened the door hastily, and paused for an instant in some surprise at the sight of the two guests of whose arrival she had been unaware, he broke into that boisterous guffaw which had driven Justin out of the house. "Di!" he exclaimed, after his companions had risen and bowed obsequiously to the stately girl, but without venturing upon any other salutation. "I've some news for you, my little lass. Fleming here has brought it from Lowborough, and it's too good to be kept till morning. Guess what old Herford's done. Cut off his own son with a shilling, and left every penny to the parson!"

"To Justin!" was Diana's startled exclamation.

"Ay! to Justin!" repeated her father, mimicking her tone, and breaking into another shout of merriment, "to our friend Justin, you know. Herford Court, and £1,500 a year! Not a bad turn of fortune for a poor parson with less than £200. That's all, my girl. Off with you."

Diana readily obeyed. But she stepped back slowly and timidly to her parlor, where she had left Justin less than three minutes ago. She lingered at the closed door shamefaced and irresolute; and when she opened it and saw at a glance from under her droop-

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ing eyelids that he was gone, she felt a momentary sense of relief, quickly followed by a chill of disappointment. Yet she was happy; happier than she could ever have imagined. She sat down in her old chair, and gazed steadily though absently into the fire. Was it real that Justin had stood before her not ten minutes ago, telling her he loved her, and saying, "Would to God she was his wife!" She had been very miserable this morning—speechlessly miserable; for how could she put her sorrow into words that would not shock herself? She had almost been tempted to doubt God's love for her; and she had thought her lot was harder than the lot of any woman whom she knew. Yet all the while He had held this priceless gift in store for her.

Diana hid her face in her hands, and sobbed thankfully. The very thought of being chosen and loved by Justin made her feel humble, and unworthy of so much gladness. Her lot had been very different from that of other girls; different even from the lives of her own brothers and sisters, who had each broken away from their father and their dreary home, and taken their own course in the world. Diana had never found it in her heart to do this. "He is my father," she had often said to herself, "and there is nobody to care for him but me." There had been a staunch loyalty in her soul towards the man to whom she stood in the relationship of daughter. Probably she did not know all his misdeeds as the world outside

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did; but she knew that all respectable men and women stood aloof from him, and from her as belonging to him. Her father had numbers of boon companions; but she had only one friend. And that friend was the best man in all her little world; and he had just said that he loved her. What had she done that such a man should love her?

After a while she sat down to her little writing-table, where she was used to write painful, pitiful letters to those brothers and sisters of hers who had strayed away into the wide world, and who had fallen mostly into trouble. They had quitted their post in disgust, and had fallen into other troubles. Diana was the only one who had been strong enough to resist evil. She could hear her father's drunken laughter, and the shouts of his visitors echoing through the quiet house; and she paused to listen, with the pen in her hand, and with the soft flush in her face dying away into paleness. Those other children of her father had forsaken him through anger and antipathy; and was she to be lured away from him by any promise of joy and happiness to herself? She laid her head down upon the desk before her, and did not lift it again for a long while. There was no sob to be heard, and no tear fell from her eyes. If she accepted Justin, she must give up her father; and she asked herself mournfully, what would become of him, if he was left to run on in his evil ways, with none of the checks she could interpose?

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"Why did you go away so soon?" she wrote at last, not daring to begin with any epithet of affection. "My father kept me only a minute, and I came back again to you, and found you gone. He called me to tell me you are to inherit Herford. I am more glad than I could say to you; for though poor Richard ought to be the heir, I have always feared that Herford Court would come to ruin, just as our old place is. You know how my father has ruined Rillage Grange. I cannot remember it very much better than it is now; but they say it was a beautiful place, when it came to him from his father. You know what my father might have been; and you know what he is. Well! Richard would have been as he is; you will be what he might have been.

"Justin, I am very sorry; I am almost heart-broken for him. Sometimes I feel all compassion, and grief, and tenderness for him; and then it seems to me as though I could not go on, day after day, seeing him destroy himself. But I shall bear it better, and have more patience now, because you will help me. I ought to have said to you that I cannot be your wife, as long as my father needs me. There is not a creature in the world who has any influence over him besides me. If I left him he would ruin himself swiftly, body and soul. Every one else has forsaken him, because they could not bear it. But God has given to me strength and courage to bear it; and I must never give him up. It would be

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next thing to heaven to be your wife. But I ought not, and I cannot quit my father even for heaven itself, if I can keep him back from any evil. Think of it! It may be long years; it may be nearly all our life-time! No, it would be best for you to forget what you have said to me this evening; but it will be best for me to remember it, and live upon it. It will lift me up out of my dull and dreary cares to think that you have once really loved me.

"Do not think I am unhappy as I write this; I am quietly, blissfully happy. I keep saying to myself, 'He loves me! he loves me!' I may well be happy. There is not a woman in the world with whom I would change lots to-night. But it shall not interfere with our future friendship that you were once so good to me as to wish me to be your wife. If you marry some one else—as I almost hope you will by-and-by—I shall try to forget it then, for your sake; but until that time, I will remember it morning and night, when I pray God to bless you. He will bless you. You will be a good rich man, as you have been a good poor one. Ah! my dear! I thank God Richard is not in your place to make another bad rich man in this little corner of England. I shall see Herford and Herford people good and prosperous. How much happier it is for me that I have not to bid you farewell, and see your face no more. That would make my life dreary indeed. But I shall see you still as often as ever. The road over the cliffs will be no

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farther, either for you or me. I shall see you coming as my friend, bringing me courage and patience to fulfill my duties. There will be no separation between us. You at Herford and I at Rillage, only the fields and the cliffs between us. Was it not the faith and love of true hearts, never altogether failing Him, which made our Lord's life not one of utter suffering? He was never left alone—never but once; and then the Father was with Him.

"Yours, my dear Justin,

"DIANA."

She did not venture to read her letter again, after finishing it. If she could have been Justin's wife! But that could not be. She was the only prop of the falling house. If she was not there what would become of George, to whom the estate would come, or what was left of it, at her father's death? How would poor Milly manage, with her brood of little children and her scampish husband, who would not work, but was not ashamed to beg? And Regy, far away in Australia, whose appeals for help to keep him from actual starvation often wrung her heart. They were all leaning upon her, and if she forsook her post they would sink low in actual poverty and degradation. She knew well how thriftless and extravagant they were; how incapable of helping themselves out of their difficulties, and how thankless to her for the little aid she could give them, snatched from the general wreck and

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ruin about her. But she could not abandon them or her father—no, not if the gates of heaven were thrown open to her!

Squire Lynn was in the habit of saying, "Spoil your children; fool them to the top of their bent; let 'em take their own way, and don't cross 'em. I did it with my youngest, little Di, and just mark how she has turned out. There isn't a woman like her in all the country round—and she never went to school in her life."

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CHAPTER IX.

DRIFTING.

JUSTIN did his utmost to shake Diana Lynn's resolution, but she had a mind and conscience of her own, and was accustomed to abide by their decision. It was hard to have the chance of happiness urged upon her and yet to turn away from it, and sentence herself to imprisonment with a drunken and eccentric father, whose mode of life made it impossible for her to have any associates of her own. Justin thrust upon her acceptance the highest earthly happiness she could wish for; but she would not take it at the cost of others, though he argued that her duty lay in choosing her own welfare and his.

"Why do you tempt me?" she cried, almost indignantly. "Don't you see how difficult it is for me to stand by my father and the others? It is no pleasure, no profit, no glory to me to keep true to them! I would rather be your wife than anything else in the world, but I was born his daughter and their sister; nothing can alter that. And you know they would sink lower than they are if I left my place here. You have everything you can wish for: your mother and Pansy, your estate and parish, and a hundred things to do and occupy you, all apart from me. Life can-

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not be lonely and desolate to you. You have everything you wish for."

"Except you, Diana," he said persistently. "And I have nothing I wish for," she answered, looking up to him with her dark, deep eyes, "nothing but your love, and that I must set on one side as a temptation, and a snare, if you will not cease to urge me. I thought you had made me happier, but you are making me miserable."

"I will not make you miserable," he said discontentedly; "but my life must be very poor and incomplete without you. My mother and Pansy! An old woman, not over-wise, and a little child, and no other companionship! All the hardship is not on your side, my darling!"

But it had to stand at that, and Justin was compelled to bear his disappointment. In fact he was so occupied at this time, that except at short intervals his disappointment did not prey upon him. As Diana had refused to be his wife, at least for an indefinite season, he could not confide to her that secret perplexity of his. The matter remained simply in his hands, and was drifting along to a quiet settlement. The whole neighborhood was satisfied with old Richard Herford's will, for which it had been fully prepared beforehand, and expressed its satisfaction in flattering terms to the new owner. His uncle Watson, the lawyer at Lowborough, expedited the final settlement of the affairs with friendly expedition, taking

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them almost into his own hands, as though Justin was a minor. Though he was fond of both his nephews, he was glad of the turn which had made Justin the heir of Herford, feeling a rooted conviction that he would make a good provision for his younger brother, if ever he should turn up again, whereas the young scamp himself would surely have run through the property swiftly. He was one of the two executors appointed by the will, and he immediately applied for probate of it. He also effected the change of name from Webb to Herford, required by the testator, as speedily as possible, almost without consulting Justin at all. But there was no reasonable objection that Justin could offer to these proceedings without confiding his difficulty to Mr. Watson. This he could not bring himself to do. He felt that he must keep his power in his own hands.

But he was in no haste to leave his small, inconvenient vicarage, or to give up his living, distasteful as his profession was to him. Now that another career—the one he would have chosen—was open to him, his humble home and his pastoral duties seemed dearer to him. His church was better filled, and he fancied he could preach to his people with more result than formerly. There was no one to thwart or hinder him in his parish. Mrs. Herford was quite content to reign alone at the Court, if she might have the income of the whole estate to spend, but her own three hundred a year was insufficient to keep it up as

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it should be. Justin was not taking his proper place in the neighborhood, she complained, by dwelling in that little poky vicarage, and Mr. Watson sided with her. Justin ought to live as Herford of Herford Court was expected to live.

But it was more than twelve months after old Richard Herford's death before Justin gave up his little living and removed to the Court. During that time he was busy making every possible inquiry after his missing brother, and following up every clue that seemed likely to lead to his discovery. It was all in vain. No sign came to them that the prodigal son was yet alive, though in some far country. His mother, when she was in low spirits, wept abundantly over the mysterious fate of her poor boy; but Mrs. Herford was seldom in low spirits, now she was undisputed mistress of Herford Court, though she had some jealous misgivings with regard to Diana Lynn, and treated the friendship existing between her and Justin with chilling distance.

It was not long before Justin Herford was made justice of the peace, for a magistrate was much needed in the neighborhood, Squire Lynn being frequently unfit to discharge the duties of that office. All the cares of a landowner came upon him. In this throng of new duties the old ones became too burdensome. It had always been irksome to him to visit the sick and dying, to christen the infants, and bury the dead among his parishioners. He was a

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little more at home in the schools, asking questions of the red-fisted, red-faced boys and girls fresh from the beach, especially when Pansy was with him, displaying her intimate acquaintance with every one of them, and prompting the answers that should be given. But he had not time for the faithful discharge of these obligations; and when at last his conscience was satisfied that he had done all he could for the finding of Richard, he resigned his living, and, it being in his own gift, appointed to it his own friend and old college chum, a poor curate from a north-country parish, who accepted it with unbounded gratitude and joy.

Gradually the neighborhood began to forget that Justin Herford, of Herford Court, had formerly been Justin Webb, the vicar of that little seaboard parish. He was the squire, and though the estate was a small one, he was one of the influential landowners in the county; possessing an amount of education and cultivation superior to most of them. He was looked up to as a man of mark. If he was absent from the magistrates' meetings all parties regretted it; and especially the accused, if they happened to be less culpable than they appeared to be. His business faculties, which had not found scope as a clergyman, were developed in the successful management of his estate, and the little village belonging to him. It was a singularly prosperous life he led. He was a born master, with a quick eye to detect bad service or good, and a firm, quick

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will to exact from each person their best work. His lands were farmed to perfection; and his tenants stirred up to vie with him in the careful cultivation of their ground. His village was clean and orderly, with savings banks and reading rooms for his people. The church, under his friend Philip Cunliffe, was as well controlled as his estate. He had his intimate friend living within a stone's throw of his own home, and the woman whom he loved with unswerving constancy and devotion within an hour's walk of him. His little Pansy was blooming into a pretty, sweet-tempered, charming girl. Yet there were times when Justin's sky was clouded, he hardly knew why. There was a slumbering, subtle sense of insecurity underlying all his sunny days. But even this passed away, as year after year went by, bringing no news of his disinherited brother.

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CHAPTER X.

THE VICAR OF HERFORD.

PHILIP CUNLIFFE, the friend to whom Justin had given the living of Herford, was an enthusiast in all the duties and offices of his profession. He set them far above every other obligation, and his whole heart was bent upon their fulfillment. There was a good share of asceticism in his temperament; and worldly affairs of any kind had little interest for him. He literally took no thought for his life, what he should eat, or what he should drink, or what clothing he should put on. He might be seen every day of the year, fine or stormy, marching with slow long strides about his parish to the most distant outlying homesteads, dressed in a shabby, white-seamed old coat, which had come very gradually down from the dignity of Sunday wear, to the last stage of brownness that it was possible for a gentleman's coat to exhibit. His tall, spare figure, and gentle, absorbed face were familiar to every one of his parishioners, down to the youngest child that could totter about the fields and lanes, or patter into the tide on the beach. He knew nothing, and could learn nothing about farming and fishing; and his parish felt that he was all the more a parson for that. Both farmers and fishermen felt a

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mutual contempt for each other's opinion in the calling that the other had not been born to; and a parson, who meddled with neither, but stuck close to his books and his church, was worthy of their deepest respect. When Mr. Cunliffe stopped to speak to them at their work, with his thin, worn features, and his absent gaze, which seemed always straining to catch a glimpse of something far beyond the poor objects of their interest, they felt themselves in the presence of a spiritual pastor and master indeed, as they had never done with Master Justin; for so they continued to call their landlord and magistrate.

Though Mr. Cunliffe took no thought for his life, it was essential that some one should take thought for him, and for the food and clothing of the household. The vicarage was full of children, till the small rooms which had appeared so inconvenient and comfortless to Justin, seemed always overflowing with them. There was not much order or neatness in the house, and it would have been a work of difficulty to maintain either; but Mr. Cunliffe was too contemplative and rapt in thought to take much notice of the general discomfort and confusion. His study was in the attics, out of the noise and disturbance; and there he spent most of his time when he was not about his parish business. Mrs. Cunliffe was a meek-looking little woman, with a soft step, and quiet muffled voice, apt to fall into a whisper. She was not a stirring, energetic, bustling person; though the female population

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of Herford were in the habit of saying under their breath that she was a deep one. It was always with a reluctant step that any farmer's or fisher's wife carried her goods to the vicarage, where she was certain to come away beaten in her efforts to make a bargain. The offertory money passed through Mrs. Cunliffe's hands; and though there was very little real poverty or need in the parish, there were low murmurs current among the old folks, whose claims upon it had been more liberally met in Justin's time. She had been known to give twopence to the mother of a family, plunged into sudden distress by the illness of her husband, with the encouraging remark, "There! that will float you again!" The words had run into a proverb among the Herford folk. "We've a rare good parson," they said among themselves, "but parson's wife—she's no better than she should be."

There was one cottage in Herford which was always an eye-sore to Justin, and a plague of heart to Mr. Cunliffe. It was the last in the long, straggling village street, farthest away from the beach, and nearest to the coppices of dwarfed trees and tangled brushwood, where Richard Herford, in his boyhood, had learned how to snare his father's game and poach on his preserves. The thick stone walls of this cottage, and the thatched roof, covered with ivy and house-leek, were picturesque enough; but Justin's eye was offended by the dirt and squalor of the unkept garden, and of the rooms within, which, however, he rarely entered.

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The old woman living in it, Martha Dart, and her daughter Leah, were the last of the bad lot who had helped to ruin Richard. Herford was too small a place to be a desirable dwelling for men decidedly set against the tide; and after old Richard Herford's death, the little gang of poachers and petty larceny delinquents had melted away before the general improvement and prosperity which followed Justin's succession to the estate. Old Martha Dart, who had been goose-girl at the Court, and had her cottage almost rent free, was too old to flit away with her gang of sons and grandsons; and her youngest daughter Leah was usually at home with her.

But though Justin rarely set his foot into the cottage, Mr. Cunliffe visited it as regularly as any other house in his parish. He had never succeeded in winning this old woman to church, though Leah, who was ambitious, had consented to sing in the gallery with the children of the Sunday school, if Miss Jenny Cunliffe would sing there too. Old Martha Dart went, she said, to meeting in the lighthouse, where a service was held on Sunday night, at an hour when the parish church was closed.

"I like the ways on it best," said the blear-eyed, bent old woman, "it's more home-like. It does na' matter what clothes I go in; and I hanna' got no church clothes, like Christians. I dun very well at the old lighthouse. He's my brother-in-law; and there's a chimbley corner as I can sit in just the same

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as my own fireside. Church religion's too grand for such as me."

"My good woman, religion is the same everywhere, in church or chapel," said Mr. Cunliffe, in a firm yet mild tone. He had said the same words over hundreds of times, and would say them hundreds of times more to old Martha Dart's dull ears. "Religion is to believe in God, and to love Him. You can do that here, in your own house, in the poorest rags, as truly as the richest personage in the grandest church in the world. Going to church or chapel is not religion; it is only part of the outward form of it."

"Ay! ay! I canna' understand," muttered old Martha sullenly, "if it inna religion to go to church, folks is in a bad way. I go to th' old lighthouse, because I've got no church-going clothes; but I war married in church, and I'll be buried in church, and if that inna religion enough for an old creature like me, God Almighty's very hard to please, and there's more folks like me in a bad way."

"Martha," said Mr. Cunliffe earnestly, "let me tell you once more that God is not hard to please. Nay; He loves you, and only seeks your love. He is looking out for you, and is ready to welcome you; like the father in the parable I read to you so often. You recollect? The younger son had gone away into a far country, and had wasted all he had in riotous living; and he was coming home again, ragged, and hungry, and penniless. 'But when he was yet a

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great way off, his father saw him, and had compassion on him, and ran, and fell on his neck, and kissed him.' That is only a poor image of what God feels for you and me."

"Ay! but it doesn't seem real like," answered the old woman. "I always think of Master Dick when you talk like that. Th' old master didn't forgive him like the man in the book. Leastways he cut him off from everything. Laws! it's easier to tell a tale like that than to love folks and forgive folks. God Almighty's cut me off from everything, even church-going clothes; and I canna believe as He's willing to give me the best robe, and a ring for my finger, and new shoes for my feet. Nay! I'll be bound to be buried in your church, and if that inna enough, why, I must take my luck with the other folk."

"You leave mother alone, sir," said Leah, "she's in a bad way to-day, she is. But it's true what she said. It was a hard thing of th' old master to cut off his only son. It's ten years since he died, and nigh upon fifteen since Master Dick ran away. He was a brave, bold young gentleman as ever trod."

"Ay! that he was," muttered her mother.

"I never saw him," answered Mr. Cunliffe, who always felt a yearning of compassion towards the erring and disinherited son; "but there is no hope now that he will ever come back."

"How long was the younger son away in the parable?" inquired Leah with eagerness.

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"There is nothing in the parable to indicate the time of his absence," he replied; "he did not come back till he had spent all, and was ready to perish with hunger."

"He came home because he'd nothing to eat," said Leah, with a hard smile on her face; "it wasn't for love of his father, or of his mother that bore him. Master Dick's sure to come back some day, when he's got no more money to spend, and is tired of earnin' any. He'll come home yet; and what will he feel when, instead of his father a lookin' out for him, and a runnin' to meet him, he finds another man's son set up in his stead as master of Herford? Do you think he'll believe in God Almighty's love, sir?"

"If Richard Herford is still living," replied Mr. Cunliffe, "he cannot expect to find his father alive yet. He knew how old he was, and how little chance there could be of ever seeing his face again; and he trampled on his father's love, and counted it worthless. It is what you are doing with the love of God."

"I think I've got as much religion as the quality," said Leah, with a slightly anxious expression on her face; "Miss Pansy isn't more regular than me at church. I shouldn't like to have less than the quality."

But fortunately for Leah, Mr. Cunliffe had not heard what she said, for her mother had spoken

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to him at the same moment, and he was listening to her querulous tones. His visit was soon brought to an end, and he left the cottage somewhat more faint-hearted than usual at his failure in making any impression on the dull and obstinate mind of the old woman, whose life was drawing so nearly to its close.

Leah Dart was regarded as a link between the old times and the new in Herford. She had not had her full share of the excitement and variety of the former days, when poaching and smuggling and petty thefts had filled the cottage with a rude abundance of forbidden luxuries, besides bringing a succession of stirring and hair-breadth escapes from detection; old times which formed the constant theme of her mother's lamentations. Nor had she been able to share fully in the new reign of quiet prosperity and comfort which had set in upon the little sea-side village. She was a girl of sixteen when Richard Herford disappeared, and probably no one had mourned him more deeply, or continued to cherish the hope of his return more faithfully. She had helped her mother in the care of the poultry belonging to the Court, and so had frequent opportunities of seeing Richard, who had never failed in giving the rosy black-eyed girl a word or a smile as he passed her at her work. She had often watched and waited for hours, and placed herself in his way to catch either the smile or the word. The

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young heir was three years older than herself, and was almost an object of worship to her. And after he was gone she could not bring herself to look with any favor on the rough young fishermen who tried their rude fashion of courtship with her. For Leah, Richard Herford was still alive, and certain to come home sooner or later. Probably she was the only person in Herford who really believed him to be alive, or wished for his return.

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CHAPTER XI.

OLD FOSSE'S TEMPLE.

IMMEDIATELY below the cliff on which Herford Court was built a tongue of rugged crags stretched out abruptly into the sea, rising at the end into a precipitous platform about a hundred feet from the water. On this platform stood the lighthouse which old Martha Dart preferred as a place of worship to the church in which Mr. Cunliffe officiated. A narrow path ran along the lower edge of the ridge, which was never quite under water, though in stormy weather the surf and foam broke over it in such a manner as to make the lighthouse keeper's task far from pleasant. But since Justin came into his kingdom he had made the path secure and safe by strong walls built on each side, founded so firmly on the living rock that old Jeremy Fosse had been able to set up his Sunday evening meetings without fear of being left without a congregation. The lantern hill with its old chapel converted into a lighthouse, had always been a favorite haunt of the Herford fishermen. But as for the women, it was only on the fairest and mildest of summer evenings that they were to be found among Jeremy's hearers; Martha

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Dart made her appearance there not more that once or twice in the year.

When Mr. Cunliffe left his incorrigible parishioner, Martha Dart, he turned his steps towards the lighthouse. It was a fair, sunny day late in February; the gorse bushes were ready to burst into golden bloom, and the buds on every bush and tree were beginning to thicken and glisten in the warm sunlight. The vicar passed along with a vague mournfulness of spirit, altogether at variance with the joyousness of the coming spring. He was not sure to find Jeremy Fosse at his post, but the lantern hill was a favorite spot of his own; for beneath the old gray building was a stone bench, where he and Justin had spent many an hour in friendly communion, and from which the sunset could be seen, even so early in the year, flinging its ruddy streaks upon the waves. In another hour the sun would sink below the unbroken line of the sea; and he paced along slowly with long, deliberate strides across the ridge, where, on either side of him, the tide was washing up softly and secretly against the cruel rocks. He fancied he was meditating; but the lulling murmur of the waters had cunningly stolen away his thoughts, and left him mechanically repeating over and over again the words of some old rhyme which had taken possession of his brain. It was only when he turned the point of the road, and saw old Fosse mending nets on his favorite seat, that his mind was aroused again.

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Jeremy Fosse was not as old as many of the men in Herford, but he had been called old so long that it had become part of his proper name. He was a tall, athletic man, between sixty and seventy years of age, with a brown, honest, weather-beaten face, hair bleached white as snow, and blue eyes, still keen and sharp enough to discern objects far out at sea without his telescope. Possibly he had earned his epithet *old* from having set himself up early as a teacher of others. He had joined the Methodists of Lowborough when there was a drunken and swearing vicar of Herford, in old Richard Herford's bachelor days; and his affection for Justin, and reverence of Philip Cunliffe, had not shaken his loyalty to his early choice. He had been a local preacher for the Methodists at a time when to be that exposed him to ill-will and persecution in his native village; but he had never wavered. He had forsaken neither his village, nor his work as a preacher in it; and his dogged perseverance and undoubted courage had prevailed over his persecutors in the long run.

Justin had always felt a strong friendship for old Fosse, even as a lad, when he had stolen within earshot of his out-door preaching, and found it more interesting than the more literary sermons of the vicar. Old Fosse was also an excellent authority about the weather and the tides, and he had been the best fisherman in the village, until a sharp attack of rheumatic fever had laid him low, and made it

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dangerous for him to resume his old occupation. Justin had then made him keeper of the lighthouse, where, as he said gratefully, he had always a good roof over his head, and strong walls to keep the wintry storms out. No danger of old Fosse neglecting his duties as the last keeper had done.

Mr. Cunliffe had found more real friendship with Jeremy Fosse than with any other of his parishioners; and old Fosse prized his friendship next to Justin's. Ever since Justin had become vicar of Herford he had led the choir at the morning service, though he could not be present in the afternoon; for he was appointed by the Methodist minister at Lowborough to preach in distant villages, often having to walk five or six miles after his preaching was over, and hasten back without resting, to kindle his lamp in the lighthouse and hold his own special service there. This February afternoon, as his clergyman approached him, he stood up and took off his knitted woollen cap, whilst a bright light came into his blue eyes, which were growing a little sunken under his white eyebrows.

"It's a rare sight always, sir," he said, after they had shaken hands cordially, and Mr. Cunliffe had taken a seat beside him; "it's a rare sight is the sea! I'd never grow weary of it. It's part of the Lord's speech that He's utterin' to us day after day; but oh, what a world o' meanin' there is in every word of it! I wonder sometimes if I shall make it out through

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all eternity. Sometimes it seems to mean perfect peace, and sunshine, and love, and praise; and it looks like unto the sea o' crystal mingled with fire, stretchin' out before the throne o' God, with the harpers standin' on it, harping with their harps. And then a change comes, and it's all wild, and cruel, and ragin', and like unto the wicked that have no peace; and it's constantly castin' up mire and dirt, and I say in my heart, thank God, there'll be no more sea o' wickedness, but there'll be a sea o' glass before the throne. Ah, there's a meanin' in every look of it, if I could only make it out."

"Jeremy," said Mr. Cunliffe abruptly, "what sort of lad was young Richard Herford?"

"Why," answered old Fosse, "he was like the sea when it's all foam, and froth, and breakers, and mischief. He was never quiet, was Master Dick. If I'd only know of his repentance I could almost wish him safe in Abraham's bosom with poor beggar Lazarus. It 'ud be a rare bad thing for Herford if he ever come back troublin'; even if he'd got conversion he'd always be a light-headed, skittish fellow; like the silly women that Paul says are 'ever learnin', and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.' Some folks need a deal o' conversion, and he'd be one of them. He'd want convertin' scores o' times before he'd leave off backslidin'. No, no; pray God Master Dick may never come back to Herford!"

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"Why, Jeremy!" exclaimed Mr. Cunliffe, "are you setting your face against a prodigal?"

"No, sir; not if he be a true prodigal," he answered; "let him come home a true prodigal, willin' to be one of th' hired servants, and he'd be welcome. But Master Dick 'ud never be like that. In these times prodigals are quite angered if they don't find the fatted calf cooked at once for 'em, and rings ready for their fingers, and the easiest shoes for their feet. They think it a far finer thing to have gone away and wasted their substance in riotous livin', than to have stayed quiet at home, like th' elder brother that was always with his father. And there are folks that teach as much. 'The greater the sinner the greater the saint,' they say. No, I say; the saints o' the Bible were never great sinners to begin with. There's Abraham, and Moses, and Daniel, and the prophets, and John and his fellow disciples. I'd not trust to Master Dick ever bein' much of a saint; but Master Justin, God bless him, isn't far off the kingdom o' heaven; he's very nigh its gates."

"Not inside yet?" asked Mr. Cunliffe with a smile.

"Not quite. As far as I can judge," replied old Fosse, "he's a grand man; but the world has its grip on him yet. But he's at the gate of his father's house, and never strayed away into the far country, like Master Dick. He's given peace and quietness to Herford, such as never was in my days. I'd a line

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or two of one of our hymns runnin' sing-song through my head as you came up here, sir—

> 'Glide our happy hours away,
> Glide wi' down upon their feet.'

Thanks be to the Lord and Master Justin!"

The old rhyme that had been running through Mr. Cunliffe's brain came back again as Fosse spoke, and a flush of self-reproach passed over his pale and quiet face. He wished his mind was freer from old college studies. Here was a point to be gained in his upward course.

"But if Richard Herford came back, he could have no claim on the estate," he said musingly.

"Folks aren't altogether sure," answered old Fosse; "there was a talk just at first—a bit o' whisperin' talk—that Master Justin didn't seem quite easy about taking the place. We were all hearkenin' out for some fresh news, either as Master Dick was come, or Master Justin would na' enter altogether into full possession. There were folks as said the Darts knew where he was bidin'; but it's ten years ago now since his father died, and no news of him yet. It was his own father that ruined him; for 'He that spareth his rod hateth his son; but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes.'"

A slight shadow of anxiety flitted across the vicar's face, as the thought of his own children rapidly crossed his mind. He was well aware that they never re-

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ceived any chastisement from himself, beyond a mild rebuke, which was seldom heeded.

"It's a hard thing to be a good father," he said.

"Ay, so it is," assented old Fosse; "it's not a easy thing to be good at aught; even a good lighthouse man. Now and again I leave my oil-can till there's barely enow' to keep my lamps burnin' all night. I sometimes do wonder that the Lord said as half the virgins were wise, and only half of 'em foolish. If He'd a said nine out o' the ten were foolish, it 'ud have seemed more life-like. I've had to melt down all sorts o' grease to keep my light up, and all because o' my own folly. There's plenty of oil kept up at the Court for me, if I'd only recollect it betimes; but instead o' that I've been forced to take my wife's grease, ay, and the butter too once. I made a kind of a parable of it the next Sunday, and told 'em how we were forced to use up our own good things to keep our lamps a burnin', if we neglected goin' to Him as was willin' and eager to give us the best of oil. God Almighty doesn't wish to take away His gifts—our boats, and nets, and flocks, and houses, and children; but if we won't keep our lamps burnin' for want of the oil He's ready to give us into th' bargain, we're forced to use up those other gifts of His. That seemed to take hold on them, sir. My wife didn't mind the loss of her butter when she saw what came of it; but she takes care I'm never out of oil since then."

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"Have you many of the men up here on Sunday nights?" asked Mr. Cunliffe.

"Mostly the wastrels," he replied, "them as would come whether there's meetin' or no; them as have no pleasant fireside, and them as are out at service with the farmers, and them as love to keep a watch o'er the sea. A few of the lasses and women come in the summer, but I give them no encouragement; it's like havin' them in the forecastle. Keep to your own deck, says I. There's the church, with a good roof and comfortable seats, and plenty o' light and no slippy path to travel along, shriekin' if they slip on a bit of seaweed. My wife goes to church quite regular. If there was nobody but a dumb dog at church, as there used to be, why, my duty would be different; or if there was a wolf in sheep's clothing—women's souls are as worthy as men's. But you've been here hard upon eight years, and if you canna' lead 'em the right way I'm afraid I canna'."

Old Fosse had spoken out of the fullness of his heart, and the vicar neither misunderstood him nor felt offended with him, though he smiled with a sudden sense of humor quickly repressed. The sun had gone down while they were talking, and he went indoors with Fosse to kindle the lamp in the small, square tower. It was no dwelling-place, but simply the four bare walls of the old chapel, with a small stove in one corner, and a single chair and table beside it. A few rude benches stretched across the

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room; planks, with the bark left on the under side, supported on rough logs. At the western end rose the belfry, now the lighthouse tower, with a ladder leading up into it. This was old Fosse's temple.

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CHAPTER XII.

MRS. CUNLIFFE'S CHICKENS.

OLD FOSSE'S home was in a little cottage, scarcely a gun-shot away, but well sheltered from the fury of the winds and waves which beat against the lantern hill. Behind it a meadow sloped up the cliff; and before it lay a little plot of garden, never touched by the salt tides, but kept always cool and green by the moist breezes sweeping across the sea. Mrs. Cunliffe had been to visit Mrs. Fosse this very afternoon. A very quiet woman was old Fosse's wife—a little older than himself, and accustomed to regard him somewhat as an indulgent mother regards a grown-up son, whom she has spoiled a little in his young days. She usually left him to talk, while she sat by in silence, with a placid smile of approbation and pride on her tranquil face. But when Mrs. Cunliffe met with her alone, it was necessary to exert herself, and play the hostess to the best of her ability to the vicar's lady. She placed her in the arm-chair nearest to the fire, and put on an additional log before taking a seat herself.

"Mrs. Fosse," said Mrs. Cunliffe in her low, hushed

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voice, "wherever I go I hear nothing but praises of your fine breed of chickens. Mrs. Fosse's chickens are talked of all round the country. Mrs. Herford was talking to me about them; and Miss Pansy said, 'It's no use trying to rear them yourself. Old Martha Dart has never managed it, and she's lived all her life among poultry.' But I own I should like to try for once, Mrs. Fosse."

"It's quite easy, ma'am," she answered.

"I do so wish you would sell me just a dozen of your eggs!" continued Mrs. Cunliffe. "I'm paying tenpence a dozen for eggs just now—an enormous price for a country place like this, and for poor people like us. Nobody knows what it is to be a poor vicar's wife, with such a family as ours. But I shouldn't mind paying as much as a penny apiece for your eggs, Mrs. Fosse."

A penny each was a small price for Mrs. Fosse's brood eggs, which were eagerly sought for by all the farmers' wives in the neighborhood; but she smiled placidly.

"I'll bring you up a dozen, ma'am," she replied.

"Yes, do, please," said Mrs. Cunliffe; "I shall be so delighted to have a fine brood of chickens. But, dear me! if Martha Dart cannot rear them, how can I, who never attempted such a thing in my life? Besides, now I come to think about it, there is not a hen inclined to sit. Have you any hens inclined to sit, Mrs. Fosse?"

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"There's Snowdrop, my little white hen, is about to sit, ma'am," she said.

"Well now, dear Mrs. Fosse! could you be so very good as to let her hatch my eggs? only just hatch them, you know. I could manage them after they were hatched, oh! quite well, I know. So don't bring the eggs up to the vicarage; but put them under Snowdrop for me. You are very good, Mrs. Fosse; very good indeed. But I'm always saying what a favorite your good old husband is with the vicar. Ah, Mrs. Fosse, it isn't poor people that know what poverty really is."

"Thank God, my husband and me aren't poor, ma'am," she replied with a quiet twinkle in her eyes.

"Ah! that's exactly what I feel," observed Mrs. Cunliffe sighing; "here you are so easy and comfortable in your cottage, with your flitch of bacon in the rack, and your fine breed of poultry, and your potato patch, and your garden, with all your possessions around you. No, these are not the poor people, I say to myself. It's we who are poor. We have to carry the heaviest burden. Often and often I wish myself in your place."

"You wouldn't like our place, ma'am," said Mrs. Fosse, rousing up a little; "you wouldn't like gettin' up at five o'clock in the mornin', and goin' out all weathers to feed the pigs, and the chicks, and dig up potatoes; you wouldn't like wearin' the same clothes all the year round, save on Sundays, and

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never havin' any hands but your own to do every stroke of work about the house, to keep it clean and sweet. But, thank the Lord," she added cooling down again, "me and Jeremy are not poor!"

"No, no, you are not poor," asserted Mrs. Cunliffe emphatically; "but I must say good-by now, Mrs. Fosse. And I'm to leave my eggs for your pretty Snowdrop to hatch for me? A shilling a dozen it is to be, I think? Yes, that's right, a penny apiece; and I'll bring the money when the dear little chicks are out of the shell. Good-by."

Mrs. Fosse watched her visitor down the little garden path, with a smile on her face, and a slight shake of her head. "She shall take the full length of her tether this once," she said to herself. She was about to turn back into her house, when she heard her name called in a clear, young, ringing voice.

"That's Miss Pansy!" thought old Mrs. Fosse, and her face brightened with a peculiar tenderness; "she always reminds me of flowers, and sunshine, and birds singing; ah! and of bright angels too! Herford 'ud be a dull, sad place without Miss Pansy!"

She went down to her garden wicket, and shaded her wrinkled face with her hand, to watch Pansy coming up with swift, half-running steps from the beach, where Justin Herford was making his boat secure against the incoming tide. She had grown into a tall, slim girl, with a simple and natural grace in all her movements, and a delicate poise of her pret-

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ty head, learnt perhaps from Diana Lynn. There was an assurance of perfect health and undimmed happiness about her, constituting her chief charm, which worked subtly upon those who had fallen upon life's ordinary lot of impaired vigor, and only a moderate share of gladness. Pansy had never been ill, and had known no troubles but those rising from her grandmother's whims, from which her father had always speedily rescued her. She was the idol of the village. From the time when she had been brought a motherless baby into Herford, every mother in the neighborhood had caressed and petted her. She was simple, and easily pleased by nature. It was almost enough for her happiness to see the sun shining; and she had grown up amid a glad sense of love and joy perpetually surrounding her. She almost worshipped her father. It might be said that as yet she scarcely worshipped any greater being. A vague, conventional idea of God was in her soul; she knelt down to say her prayers punctually night and morning, and never missed church, and sang in the choir with her full, sweet voice, and had a general knowledge of religious truths. Her father, and Mr. Cunliffe, and old Fosse had each sown some good seed in her young heart. But she had had no opportunity, as yet, of learning trust in God through bitter mistrust of man; of cleaving to God because she found it vain to lean upon any fellow-creature. There was no void in her life. Her father was, in her eyes, love and wis-

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dom personified. Herford was like a small kingdom over which she reigned absolutely. Who could be happy if she was not?

As she came up to Mrs. Fosse, laughing and almost breathless, she bent down her sweet young face, and kissed the old woman who had been watching for her.

"There, mammy!" she said gaily, "that's because you look such a dear, peaceful old darling! I don't kiss everybody, you know; only my father, and granny when she is good, and one person besides—the best, and sweetest, and dearest of all living creatures. Guess who it is."

"Not a sweetheart, Miss Pansy!" cried Mrs. Fosse in a tone of real alarm.

"A sweetheart!" echoed Pansy with a flash of disdain; "who would want a sweetheart with such a father as mine! No, no, Mrs. Fosse. It's Diana; Miss Diana Lynn, my friend, and my father's friend."

"I'm glad it's nobody else, bless the Lord!" answered Mrs. Fosse greatly relieved; "but you spoke so warm and hearty, Miss Pansy, my dear! You're too young yet; and don't you go and throw away your girlhood on a sweetheart. You've got your best days, and make the most of them."

"I hate talking about such things," said Pansy with a crimson face, and her head tossed back. "I ran up to ask you to let me have your next brood of chickens, and take care of them for me till they can

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take care of themselves, for our goose-girl lets them die as soon as they are out of the shell."

"Why! I've just gone and promised Mrs. Cunliffe to let Snowdrop hatch a dozen eggs for her," answered Mrs. Fosse in a tone of chagrin.

"Mrs. Cunliffe!" cried Pansy, "why! she heard me say I was going to bespeak a brood from you! And she says she hasn't a place to keep poultry in, and granny lets them run in with ours; and there's always squabbling about the eggs that are due. Mrs. Cunliffe believes every one of her hens lays an egg every day of the year, and she cannot be convinced to the contrary. Well! I must wait, I suppose. But isn't Mr. Cunliffe a good man, Mrs. Fosse?"

Pansy checked herself suddenly, because she knew how earnestly her father deprecated anything that might tend to lessen the vicar's influence over his people.

"He's a very good man," answered Mrs. Fosse heartily.

"Besides," went on Pansy, "I have great news to tell you. We are going to London, my father and I! We set off on our travels next Monday morning, early. Father says now I am nearly eighteen it is time I saw the world a little; but I shall never love any place so well as Herford. I can't imagine being happy anywhere else; not really happy and at home. I shall enjoy going to London; and we are to be away three months, till the end of May, perhaps.

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Granny is quite wild because Dr. Vye says she must not go after all. She has been counting upon it all winter; and she said she would have another doctor, who would let her go; but my father says she shall not come with us, if there is any risk. Mrs. Fosse, did you ever know two such good men as my father and Mr. Cunliffe?"

"No, never, Miss Pansy!" she responded fervently, "none save my old man. Eh! but Herford is a favored place now! Sometimes I'm afraid it's like old Capernaum, lifted up to heaven; and the folks there wouldn't turn and repent, and it was thrust down to hell, for its hardness of heart. There's no upper sort of sin, Miss Pansy, such as Master Justin and Mr. Cunliffe can see; but there's a deal o' natural sin out o' sight. But there! Don't thee look downcast. Herford's a favored place; a very favored place."

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CHAPTER XIII.

A SEASON IN LONDON.

FOR the last ten years Mrs. Herford had had he own way without check. Justin was one of thos men, conscious of their own strength, who are extremely indulgent to the women related to them, and who feel that any unnecessary assertion of their authority is tyrannical. He was over-scruuplosn in his chivalrous deference towards his mother; the more so as he felt that there was no very deep esteem and respect for her character in his inmost heart. It was now, therefore, an almost unbearable trial to her to be debarred from accompanying her son and granddaughter to London.

She was still under sixty; and time had not made those ravages upon her good looks, which are manifest in many faces. There were no finely-drawn lines of thought and sorrow upon her smooth forehead, and her light blonde hair scarcely showed a streak of gray, while her slight and small figure was lstill quite young in its erectness. When she was wel dressed—and she was always well dressed now—she might easily pass for being fifteen years younger then she was; and noting pleased her so much as

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to be taken for Justin's wife. She neither felt nor looked like a woman of sixty, for her mind had not grown at all since her marriage with Richard Herford, thirty-three years ago. It had attained all the maturity of which it was capable during her first marriage and widowhood, and had never ripened into mellowness, but remained green and hard, like fruit that has grown in poor and stony ground. She had set her heart upon passing this season in London; and now a serious attack of bronchitis had compelled Dr. Vye to forbid the journey, and above all the exposure to so great a change of climate.

Justin was by no means grieved. He very decidedly preferred taking his holiday with Pansy alone; though he had been too considerate of his mother's feelings to suggest such a course. He was compassionate, and unwaveringly patient and forbearing towards her; but he had never loved her since she had married the old man, whose estate he was now possessing. The impression made upon the boy had been too deep and indelible, ever to pass away altogether as he grew into manhood. He had not left Pansy's training to his mother. The only point on which his will had clashed with her wishes was that of sending the girl to a boarding-school. Pansy had never left home, and he had chosen her governesses himself; asking no one's opinion, except Diana Lynn's. Silently, though not quite unsuspected by Mrs. Herford's hundred-eyed jealousy, Diana had

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directed Pansy's education, and found in so doing the sweetest occupation of her dreary life.

Justin was little over forty, and the last ten years had given him an air of distinction and of genial dignity, which had not characterized him as the poor and reserved Vicar of Herford. The consciousness of being a good landowner, and a magistrate looked up to as one of the best on the bench, sat well upon him. He was a tall, vigorous, handsome man, and like his mother looked even younger than his years. The certainty of being listened to had made him more fluent, on the platform of the many meetings he was invited to attend, than he had ever been in his pulpit. He was a leader of politics in the county, and reckoned upon as one of the strongest men of his party. Sir John Fortescue, the senior member for the northern division of the shire, made much of Justin Herford; especially since he had published a pamphlet on Sir John's favorite measure. Many a time had Pansy's pretty face flushed, and her eyes glistened through happy, unshed tears, as she had listened triumphantly to the applause elicited by her father's well-turned and well-considered sentences. He was engaged to speak at sundry meetings, religious and political, during April and May, to London audiences; and she felt assured beforehand that his eloquence would create a wonderful sensation; for Pansy had never heard an orator to compare with her father. Justin himself looked forward to

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these appearances upon a wider stage with diffidence, not unpleasantly flavored with the recollection of the flattering opinions uttered by his bishop, and Sir John and other critics, well acquainted with London speeches. Both he and Pansy were about to make their first appearance before the world, on the world's own stage.

Justin had taken care to provide the means of doing so with a kind of quiet grandeur, suitable to his station. He did not like to be stinted in his expenditure while dwelling in London; and he desired Pansy to look her best, the more so as Lady Fortescue had graciously offered to be her chaperone, whenever she wished to go where chaperones were necessary. He had been very frugal in his personal expenditure in order to provide these funds; for he had made the discovery so quickly made by us all, that really his larger means were not much more elastic than his small stipend as vicar had been. Herford Court, and his position as landowner, could not be kept up as it should be, on much less than its full income; and as he had added an extra hundred a year to his friend Cunliffe's living, it had required strict economy to secure any surplus on his annual outlay.

"It's of no use, Justin," exclaimed his mother, the Saturday before their departure, "I must go, and I will go. If I'm too ill to go, I'm too ill to be left. It's all a nasty trick of Dr. Vye's, to keep me

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here. I'm quite well enough to go with you, I'm quite sure."

"My dear mother," he answered firmly, "Dr. Vye says the east winds in London might be fatal to you, and you hardly catch them here. It is tedious for you, I know; but there is no danger, if you take ordinary care of yourself."

"Then Pansy ought to stay with me," she said peevishly.

"If there was any danger we would both stay," he answered; "but you are to have Jenny Cunliffe with you, and you often say Jenny is more like a grandchild to you than Pansy. But there is Vye coming up the drive. Now we shall have his last word."

Dr. Vye's last word was that Mrs. Herford could not possibly go. He would not answer for her life if she went. Then she tried to make him say that she must not be left, but that he mocked at. There was no risk at all, if she would simply take care of herself, and keep in a mild, equal temperature. After an animated dispute Mrs. Herford took herself out of the room in high dudgeon, leaving Dr. Vye and her son together.

"I've just come from Rillage Grange," said Dr. Vye; "the old squire is on the verge of delirium tremens, and there's that saint, Diana, hovering about him like the angel she is. If there ever was a living saint on earth, it's Diana Lynn."

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Justin's face clouded, and his brows contracted a little. There was but one flaw in his prosperity, one cloud in his sky. His love for Diana had grown and deepened during these ten years. What it may have lost in impetuosity and passion it had gained in strength and faithfulness. It seemed as if he was bound to stand by and see her suffer a martyrdom from which he had no power to deliver her. This was growing intolerable to him.

"Is there no chance of the old drunkard's death?" he asked with a sharp and impatient ring in his voice.

"Well, not much," answered Dr. Vye with a half smile, "not if I can prevent it, you see. Of course I shall do my utmost to keep him alive; and I fancy I can drag him through. I know quite well that if I merely withheld such and such remedies, an accursed life would be taken away out of many a household; and the saints, like Diana, would come down from their crosses. But what am I to do, Herford? I'm sent for to spin out the miserable thread of their lives to the very last moment; and if I did not do all science and practice teach me, I'm neither more nor less than a murderer."

"Is he very bad?" inquired Justin, the frown darkening on his face.

"He's so bad," replied the doctor, "that I've banished Miss Di from his room, and sent in two strong men to sit up with him. I've hired a nurse

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for him, too, from the village here, Leah Dart; a strong, robust, handsome woman, with more muscle in her arm than in mine. She has promised to go, on condition that she is not called a servant. I told her I could get a real lady from London if she did not come, and that decided her. She is to have unlimited authority over the old fellow; and she'll keep Diana out of the room, I'll wager. That is exactly what I wanted."

"Then you think there is no danger for him?" said Justin.

"Not much," he answered. "Of course there are always chances; but he has pulled through many a time, and he'll pull through now. His constitution is as strong as an elephant's. So is Miss Di's. Look at her with all her troubles, as sound as a bell, with a head as clear as her skin, and that is like alabaster. She is a splendid woman, and to think of her being sacrificed to that beast!"

Justin's face reflected the disgust upon Dr. Vye's; but he gave a turn to the conversation. It displeased him to hear the old doctor himself speak of Diana in such homely terms of admiration. He would see her for himself, that very evening; his poor Diana! Why had she been so bent upon her course of self-sacrifice ten years ago? Why had she chosen her father before him? He had seen the manner of her life, lived beside it, admired and pitied it; but he could not understand it. With him she would have passed her

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days in happiness and peace; she would not have had a wish unfulfilled, if he could have met it. They suited one another; there was no barrier between them; they were equals, able to walk together side by side, with no fretting strain, or sense of inequality. Yet she had chosen to stay with a brute, who trampled upon her affection, and treated her as he would not dare to treat the meanest of servants. "He treats her worse than a dog," thought Justin, whose own dogs were dear friends and companions to him. If Diana's father loved her as he loved Pansy he might have had patience; but now he could not endure the knowledge of her daily martyrdom and purgatory.

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CHAPTER XIV.

IS IT GOD'S WILL?

THAT evening Justin was sitting in the same old arm-chair beside Diana's fire, as when he had almost fallen asleep with fatigue and excitement, the day after his stepfather's death. His thoughts went back to that time as he waited for Diana to come to him; it was most natural that they should run into that channel, though they had long ceased to perplex him, except in rare moments like these, with the question of whether he had decided rightly about old Richard Herford's will. He had left himself to drift in that one important epoch of his life, and he was out in fair and calm waters, with favoring winds filling his sails, and not a rock ahead. Surely the results proved that he was right. His eyes were not closed to-night when Diana entered with her soft footfall and quiet movements. The ten years that had made him a man who thought well of himself, and well thought of by all about him, had not seen much change in her, save a line or two of more settled sadness on her face. She had been weeping, evidently, for her eyelids were

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reddened and her lips tremulous, though she attempted to smile as he hastened to meet her. All caresses and expressions of their love had been tacitly avoided by both. They were friends only, as there could be no hope at present of a closer tie. But Justin could not refrain from taking both her hands in his and kissing her tear-stained face.

"My father is so ill," she said with a sob, "that Dr. Vye will not let me stay with him."

"Good heavens, Diana!" he exclaimed impetuously, "how long is this to go on for you and me?"

"I wish you had nothing to do with it," she answered, sitting down in her own low chair, whilst he stood before her, looking down at her moodily and almost angrily. "If it was not such a comfort to me, I could wish with all my heart that you did not care a straw about it. But, oh! Justin, you are all the comfort I have."

"Diana!" he cried with hot indignation, "do you think I can stand by and see you suffer as you do, and not long to snatch you away from your suffering? I'm not hard-hearted. If I see a dumb creature in any kind of trouble, I cannot pass it by. How do you suppose I feel when I know what you have to bear day after day? You are more precious to me than anything else in life; more precious than my little Pansy herself; and I ask myself as well as you, how long is this to go on for you and me?"

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"As long as God wills it," she said softly.

"But does He will it?" he asked. "Are you sure that He does require this sacrifice from you? Does He always send the best and sweetest of His creatures to pass through agony? Will He heat the furnace seven times hotter than it is wont to be heated for every saint He has on earth? Diana, I cannot believe it."

"The Son of God walked with them in the midst of the furnace," she replied, looking up to him with a smile on her pale face, "and the fire had no power, nor was a hair of their heads singed, nor did the smell of fire pass upon them. It is quite true, Justin. I would rather stay in the furnace, with the Son of God beside me, than sit as a queen on a throne of gold. Only I am not quite faithful enough yet to escape having my hair singed and getting the smell of fire upon me now and then. It does not burn any deeper, and I am happier than you think—happier than if I forsook my post. I am truly happy; and if I could yet save my father, I should consider my lot more blessed than if I had been your happy wife all these years."

Her voice faltered a little as she uttered the last words, and a vivid color came into the face he was regarding so moodily.

"I have not reached your height," he answered; "I cannot see things from your point of view. I'm quite blind to your happiness, Di; if you could make

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it visible to me—as visible as your red eyelids, and pale cheeks—I would take comfort to myself."

"It is all my fault for giving way to crying," she said, in a self-reproachful tone; "you know quite well what inward blessedness is when outward circumstances seem all against us. I own that my circumstances seem very much against me; but have I not your friendship?"

"My love," interrupted Justin.

"Your love," she continued, with a happy intonation of her sweet voice, "yes! your true, faithful love. And does not Pansy love me? Is she not almost like my own child to me? No! I would not change my lot, loving you two, with any other woman under the sun."

"God bless you, Diana!" he exclaimed.

"I have never said so much before," she went on; "do you wonder to hear me speak so warmly now? Ah! you are going away for a long while; and you have never left Herford for more than a day or two before. I shall miss you sadly."

"Do not you know why I have never cared to leave Herford?" he asked. "Don't I like to feel you within an hour's walk of me! Pansy has set her heart upon this journey, or I would give it up now. If I had foreseen your father's attack—"

"Do not think of it," she interrupted; "I would rather you were away. What could you do for me? Dr. Vye will be here every day; and there is no dan-

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ger, he says. By the time you come back my father will be driving into Lowborough, to the magistrates' meeting, as usual. No; you must not let me interfere any longer with your plans. Put me out of the plan of your life, Justin. It is God's will."

"How do you know it is His will?" he asked again.

"Well!" she said, with a quiet sigh, "at any rate God chooses our relationships for us. I did not choose my father, and brothers, and sisters. But He has made me one of them, of the same flesh and blood; and it seems to me that it is right to stand here in my place, till He sends some one else to fill it, or removes me from it Himself. I must do all I can for them. If they were good, and prosperous, and happy, I might be free to be happy myself; happy in my own way. But would God have me forsake them, and leave them all to sink farther into dark depths of misery and degradation, while I was sitting somewhere in the sunshine? That was not our Saviour's life, Justin."

"I wish I was wretched and degraded," he said, looking at her with a faint smile on his grave face. She shook her head, with a laugh; but still he could not help noticing, with soreness of heart, how red her eyelids were, and how languid was her whole aspect, as soon as the laugh had died away from her lips. Say what she might, it was a dreary, unwholesome life she was leading, shut out from all society and

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companionship; all but the distasteful intercourse she was forced into with her father's drunken visitors. Squire Lynn had forbidden any other of his children to enter his doors, and he was jealous of Diana holding any communication with them. Few of the ladies in the neighborhood kept up even a slight acquaintance with Squire's Lynn's youngest daughter; and Mrs. Herford, who was her nearest neighbor, was too jealous of her to be cordial with her. Justin thought of it all, as he gnawed his lips, and stared moodily into the fire.

Diana's thoughts were busy too. She had been passing through a harder time than Justin himself suspected. Only the day before, by dint of persistent and passionate entreaties, she had wrung from her father a small sum of money to remit to her needy brothers and sisters. They were away in the world, having shaken off their load; but they were not sparing of their claims, or their reproaches, when she was compelled to send a pitiful denial to their appeals. They were unjust to her, these elder ones, who had not possessed the patience and fidelity which kept her at home. It was growing more difficult to be patient and faithful. She could not keep herself from dwelling sometimes upon what she was giving up for them, and from being tempted to lay down the cross, which was growing so much heavier as years went by. It tried her almost beyond endurance, for Justin to question whether it could indeed be the

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will of God to exact from her such a sacrifice of herself. But Justin could not see as she saw. He had never been called to bear a heavy cross, and to bear it as she did, with doubts and misgivings sometimes assailing her; yet with an inward conviction that it was laid upon her by the hand of God Himself. Perhaps the day would come when he would understand why she chose the painful lot of sacrificing herself to her poor, degraded father, and unreasonable brothers and sisters.

As they sat there, not talking much, but each busy with thought, the deep silence of the night was startled by the sudden outbursts of rough shouts and cries from the room where Squire Lynn was under the custody of the men Dr. Vye had sent in to watch him. The uproar resounded through the house, and cut Justin to the quick. Was it possible to leave Diana here, within the same walls that sheltered the raving madman? But she remained calm, though sad, and her clear, dark eyes met his own bravely. There was no symptom of fear or excitement about her.

"It is my poor father," she said; "you can do nothing for me if you stay. Go away now; and go to London without any fear or trouble for me. You will write to me some time?"

"I will write every day," he answered, drawing her into his arms, as they stood together on the hearth, "and yet I cannot bear to go at all. My darling, God bless you, and keep you! You are too good a wo-

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man, Diana. If you were lower down, I should be more worthy of you."

"If I were far, far higher up," she whispered, "I should not feel worthy of you. You are the best man I ever knew, Justin; and I love you with all my heart."

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CHAPTER XV.

A PASTORAL VISIT.

MRS. CUNLIFFE did not forget her chickens. Now Pansy was in London, and Mrs. Herford confined to the house, she felt herself the sole representative of that class to which the village children were taught to look up in the words, "to order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters." As the only lady in the place she was bound to pay more frequent pastoral visits than before; those close, domestic inquisitorial visits for which Mr. Cunliffe was so unsuited. Herford was too small to be divided into districts; and the cottagers were accustomed to see first one, and then another, of the gentlefolks, as they called the inmates of the Court and the Vicarage, enter their houses for a friendly chat. The visitor they liked most to see was Miss Pansy, whose face was so bright and winsome, and whose eyes never fastened themselves cruelly on some dirty spot, and whose ears seemed deaf to the cries of the children, unless she had some toy or sweetmeat in her pocket to paci-

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fy them. Mrs. Herford, too, was welcome: she was neither dictatorial nor close-handed; though she delighted in acting the grand lady. But it was at Mrs. Cunliffe's approach, soft and stealthy, with her muffled voice and blinking, all-seeing eyes, that the faces of the cottage house-wives clouded over, as they made a desperate attempt to fling some nuisance out of sight, or hush up some troublesome child. Yet it would have been difficult, if not impossible, to convince Mrs. Cunliffe that she was not a great help to her husband, and a special favorite among his parishioners.

There was nothing to hide or hush up in Mrs. Fosse's spotless and peaceful kitchen. Her old husband was busily at work in the potato-patch, where she could see him through the little lattice window, whenever she glanced through it. He had brought in a large bunch of wall-flowers, which she had put into a jug of blue ware; and their sweet scent was filling the warm and pleasant room. It was the hour Mrs. Fosse most enjoyed. Her household work was over, and the kettle was hanging over the fire, slowly heating for tea, whilst she was knitting by the fireside, with the low-toned boom of the tide stealing in through the open door. It was all peace and quietness, and even her tranquil face fell a little, when she heard Mrs. Cunliffe's subdued "Good afternoon, Mrs. Fosse."

"Well, this is comfort, Mrs. Fosse," she said, wiping

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her feet with elaborate care on the mat at the door; "I do envy you, indeed, as much as it's right to envy anybody, you know; not more than that. You are the very picture of plenty and content! If it had only pleased Providence to cast my lot like yours! But what with the children at the Vicarage, and the strange guests Mr. Cunliffe brings to it, and our many, many claims, I've no hope of comfort like this."

"Children are a great blessing, ma'am," answered Mrs. Fosse, sighing. It was her sorrow that she had lost all her children, and it jarred upon her to hear any mother complain of the trouble they gave her, as Mrs. Cunliffe was in the habit of doing.

"That was under the old dispensation, you know," remarked Mrs. Cunliffe. "I'm not sure that it is so now, when one is poor. Not in our station, I mean, when they must be well clad and well shod, and well educated. There people like you are better off again. You have no anxiety what your sons and daughters are to be. There is always plenty of work they can do. Oh! I wish I could teach other people to be contented with their happy lot."

"Contentment's a rare herb," said Mrs. Fosse.

"So it is; so it is!" agreed Mrs. Cunliffe; "but you might all cultivate a little of it, couldn't you? Oh! be contented, be contented! I am always saying; you don't know what we have to do and bear."

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"It's easy to be content with other people's lot," observed Mrs. Fosse.

"Yes, we see how many blessings they despise and abuse," replied Mrs. Cunliffe. "Ah! there's good old Fosse at work in his garden, passing his time away in it. He's contented, I dare say, at this moment."

"Jeremy's always content," said his wife, almost huffily; "there never lived a man as cultivated content for himself, and all about him, more than my Jeremy. He's as happy as the day's long."

"That's well!" sighed Mrs. Cunliffe; "there's no shoe that pinches him. He has a good place, a good home, and good wages, and no children to hang on him. If Jeremy was not content, who should be? Shall I read you a chapter, Mrs. Fosse?"

Mrs. Fosse reached down the large old Bible from the window-sill, where it generally lay with old Fosse's spectacles on the open page. She was far better acquainted with its contents than Mrs. Cunliffe; but she sat still, and listened courteously, whilst the Vicar's lady read through a psalm as part of her pastoral duty. It was a short one, and soon ended.

"Before I go," said Mrs. Cunliffe, closing the Bible, "don't let me forget to speak about the eggs. Did you hatch a dozen for me?"

"I set a dozen under Snowdrop," she answered, "and there's nine of the prettiest little chicks as ever I saw. The last broke the shell yesterday."

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"Only nine!" exclaimed Mrs. Cunliffe. "How is that, Mrs. Fosse?"

"There's always some addled in every hatch," she replied. "I took 'em away only this morning, to ease Snowdrop, that wouldn't leave them be, and mind the chicks."

"Ah! well then!" said Mrs. Cunliffe, passively, "I shall owe you for nine. Dear! dear! What a loss there must be to you in eggs! Three bad out of one dozen."

Mrs. Fosse held her tongue, though very much against the grain. She loved peace and tranquillity herself; and how fond Jeremy was of Mr. Cunliffe! It was like a real friendship between men of the same rank; and she would not say one word to break it. Friendships of that kind were as easily crushed as eggs; but hers should not be the hand to crush theirs.

"Where are the pretty little creatures?" asked Mrs. Cunliffe, looking round the spotless kitchen, as though she expected to see the nine callow chicks somewhere about the floor.

"Snowdrop's under her hen-coop in the meadow," answered Mrs. Fosse, rising; "would you please to see them, ma'am?"

"To be sure," she replied.

They passed through the garden into the meadow, and Mrs. Cunliffe graciously invited Jeremy to accompany them. The fluffy, yellow chickens were

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stirred up from under Snowdrop's wings to show themselves, and she praised them fluently.

"It was so good of your wife to hatch them for me," she said to old Fosse; "even Martha Dart fails at that, you know. But, dear! dear! whatever am I to do with such delicate little morsels? My Charlie would squeeze them to death out of love, in a minute, Mrs. Fosse. I have no regular nursery or nurse for him; and it's a great hardship, I assure you. Couldn't you keep the precious little dears for me another week or two, till they are quite a trifle bigger and stronger? Snowdrop seems such a nice mother to them. You can't tell how I should grieve if any harm came to them. It would be a kind of little murder, you know."

"Oh, ay! ma'am," said old Fosse heartily, "leave 'em here wi' Snowdrop, and welcome. It's a pretty sight to see the hen gatherin' her chicks under her wings, and if I could I'd never have it away from under my eyes. It's like a text out of the Bible bein' spoken in our ears all the while. I think I hear our dear Lord sayin' it again, 'How often would I have gathered thy children together, as a hen doth gather her brood under her wings, and ye would not.' Ay, leave the chicks to preach one of their little sermons, ma'am."

"You're a very good man, Jeremy," said Mrs. Cunliffe, in a mildly patronizing tone; "my dear husband is always saying the same. I cannot think how

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you could ever leave the church and become one of those Methodists."

"I was born a Methodist," he answered, with a twinkle in his blue eyes, "and I never thought of leavin' my mother, to creep under another hen's wings. No, no. Leave the brood alone, I say. Don't put strange eggs into the nests; you'll never make a duckling into a barn-door fowl. And don't rob other nests to fill your own. There's only One for all the children of men to put their trust under the shadow of His wings; and me, and you, ay! and tens of thousands that are neither Church nor Methodist, may be gathered together there."

"Well, I will not argue with you, my good man," said Mrs. Cunliffe blandly, "you are too great a favorite with us both for that. So I'll leave my little nestlings with Snowdrop, Mrs. Fosse. I am very pleased with them; quite delighted."

Mrs. Cunliffe had another call to make before returning home. It was a point with her not to miss seeing Mrs. Herford every day now she was left alone, with no companionship except her own eldest child Jenny. Two or three times a week this visit was paid late in the afternoon, when Mrs. Herford never failed to ask her to stay the evening. The dinners at Herford Court were always exceedingly good, even when no guests were expected; and no one knew better than Mrs. Cunliffe how much more nourishing it is to sit down to a well-cooked meal, which pre-

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sents itself with no anxiety or care, than to one which has been a worry to you all the morning. After getting rid of her little difficulty about her brood of chickens, she mounted with greater alacrity the steep, short cut leading from old Fosse's cottage to Herford Court.

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CHAPTER XVI.

MRS. HERFORD'S SONS.

MRS. HERFORD had cherished in her bosom a keen sense of injury from the moment that Dr. Vye had pronounced his last word against her visit to London. She had been there only once since her husband died; and she had then gone alone, an obscure and unnoticed woman. Now that Justin was shining there as a star of some magnitude in certain religious and political circles, in which glory she must have had a good share, she had been cruelly prohibited from accompanying him and Pansy. Pansy's letters were full of triumph and exultation; and the girl was receiving enough attention to turn her head for life. Extreme bitterness and indignation were gnawing at Mrs. Herford's heart, and the sharpest sting of all was the conviction that her compelled absence was not considered a great misfortune by her son and granddaughter.

Jenny Cunliffe was having a rather dull time at Herford Court. Now and then she was tempted to think that the blessings of life were very unequally

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and mysteriously distributed, when Pansy was the heiress of Herford and the idol of every one belonging to her, while she was the eldest daughter of a poor vicar, with a terribly large family, and actually expected to be thankful to take Pansy's place in waiting upon a peevish and capricious old woman. Jenny's courage and patience were tested to the utmost, and only kept up to the mark by her mother's tearful exhortations and her father's unworldly sympathy and tenderness. Mrs. Cunliffe lectured her on the advantages of keeping in with the actual mistress of Herford Court, who, with all her faults, was always liberal to her dependents; whilst Mr. Cunliffe, in his dreamy, solemn voice, and his far-away gaze, talked of bearing one another's burdens, and so fulfilling the law of Christ, telling his daughter it was Christ-like to soothe the fretfulness of an old woman's weary spirit.

Jenny was always glad to see her mother come in to dinner, and for the long evening which followed. Mrs. Cunliffe listened with patient submissiveness to Mrs. Herford's strictures upon Pansy's career, and her caustic anger against Dr. Vye, and her reflections upon Justin's neglect. Now and again, with a soft, purring gentleness, she murmured a half remonstrance, which served only to keep up a pleasant tartness in the conversation—for Mrs. Herford was pleased with a very slight opposition. Mrs. Cunliffe could also hint at a fault, when she seemed to be pointing out

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a good quality, and no one could be quicker than Mrs. Herford in seizing on such a clue.

"I might almost as well be childless," remarked Mrs. Herford as they drew their comfortable chairs round the glowing fire. "Here I am left, week after week, and month after month, with no companionship except that of strangers."

"Don't say that, dear Mrs. Herford," remonstrated Mrs. Cunliffe with effusion; "surely you cannot call poor Jenny and me strangers. We have known you far too long not to love you dearly. I believe Pansy herself does not love you more than my poor Jenny does."

"I dare say not, I dare say not!" she replied. "I must say Pansy is not all I should like my grandchild to be. She has too many ways and whims of her own, and Justin fosters them most foolishly. For my part I think it is a very good thing for a girl to be brought up humbly, with no high views as to the future; just as Jenny is. I hardly see how it could be managed otherwise; but it is a bad thing for young people to have parents able to study all their likes and dislikes, as Justin does. It is Pansy here and Pansy there, as if there was no one but Pansy in the world. She needs trouble, Mrs. Cunliffe, real trouble; and Justin shields her from every rough breath. When I was her age I was already Justin's mother, and that means a deal of sorrow and trouble, as you know. I was a widow before I was twenty; a

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widow, with a fatherless boy. Yes, I had my share of trouble by the time I was Pansy's age."

"It is a good thing to bear the yoke in one's youth," quoted Mrs. Cunliffe.

"You may well say that," continued Mrs. Herford. "I am always saying to Justin, 'Pansy wants trouble. Only look at what my life has been!'"

Mrs. Herford paused, and tossed the long lappets of her lace cap behind her shoulders and folded her jewelled hands upon her lap. Her dress was very becoming to her. She would not have looked so well, probably, in a dark stuff gown and common cap; but in a rich violet silk dress, and an abundance of handsome lace about her, she was a very handsome woman, quite worthy of taking a place in London as Justin Herford's mother. This was part of her grievance; she might as well have been wearing her costly attire at one of Lady Fortescue's parties, instead of sitting here, with no admiring eyes upon her except Mrs. Cunliffe's and Jenny's.

"Look at my life!" she resumed, "a widow at twenty, with not a penny of my own. No, Mrs. Cunliffe, not a single penny of my own. I was only twenty-six when poor Mr. Herford married me, and everybody knows what a neglected wife I was after my second son was born. Everything had to give way to Richard, just as everything gives way now to Pansy. Justin might take warning! It was not of the least use remonstrating with Mr. Herford; he

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would ruin my poor Dick. I often think, though, if Dick had succeeded to his father's estate he would not have forsaken me in my gray hairs. It is going gray, Mrs. Cunliffe; I have counted several gray hairs since they went to London. Dick was a most affectionate boy, quite different to Justin, who is always cold and hard. You have noticed how hard and cold Justin is?"

"A little so; a very little, perhaps," admitted Mrs. Cunliffe guardedly.

"Very cold and hard," pursued Mrs. Herford; "so different poor Dick was! Sometimes I think he grudges me having a right to be mistress of Herford Court! Ah! it would have been quite the other way if poor Dick had only been master; he would have been delighted. But it was very wise of my poor dear husband to leave me mistress; for Diana Lynn would have been here before now, and where should I have been? Did you never notice that, Mrs. Cunliffe? Dear, dear! where are your eyes?"

"I never thought of such a thing!" cried Mrs. Cunliffe with warmth; and it was quite true she never had. Diana Lynn was one of her husband's special favorites, a peerless paragon, and Mrs. Cunliffe did not see many attractions in her.

"But I've seen it years ago," said Justin's mother, shaking her head; "if it had not been for poor Mr. Herford's will, she would have been mistress here.

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Of course Pansy knows nothing, and Jenny must not breathe a word about it to her. Justin goes there two or three times every week, and Pansy spends half her time with her. Poor Dick! he would never have wished to throw his own mother into the background; or gone to London for a season while she was ailing at home. I must say that for Dick."

"It was very sad to lose him," observed Mrs. Cunliffe.

"Ah! I know what trouble is!" she sighed, "nobody better. And that is just what Pansy wants; yes! and Justin too. He hardly knows what sorrow is. Look at him coming into such a good position, and all through me! Up in London, hand and glove with all kinds of grand people; and me to thank for it all!"

"I can't help blaming him for being ungrateful to you, after you've been such a mother to him!" said Mrs. Cunliffe.

"He never forgave me for marrying again," she went on. "He was only a little boy; but he laid it up against me for a grudge. Yet where would he have been now if I had not married again? He owes every penny he has to me. It isn't as if he inherited from his own father; but he forgets all that! But he inherits through me; and it makes it all the harder for him and Pansy to forsake me, and go alone to London."

"And my husband thinks all the world of him!"

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cried Mrs. Cunliffe, in a tone of suppressed indignation. "I believe he thinks more of his religion than mine!"

"Ah! my dear, they are men," said Mrs. Herford; "and what men see in one another to have such wonderful friendships, I cannot think. They are a great mystery, Mrs. Cunliffe. I advise Jenny to have nothing to say to them."

"I should love any man that was like my papa," answered Jenny boldly, though with a flushed face, "or like Mr. Herford!"

"Oh! my dear, hush!" cried her mother in a voice of awe. But Mrs. Herford only laughed at the girl good-humoredly enough, and called her an innocent simpleton. Mrs. Cunliffe seized the first opportunity to give Jenny a good scolding, reminding her that Mr. Herford was quite young enough to marry a girl no older than herself if he chose, and his mother would get that notion into her head if they did not take care. "Then you'll be forbidden the Court!" said Mrs. Cunliffe, as if that would be the worst fate possible for Jenny. But Jenny felt that all her innocent affection and admiration for her father's friend, and her friend Pansy's father, had been suddenly nipped by a cruel east wind, and she cried herself to sleep over the idea her mother had just put into her head.

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CHAPTER XVII.

YOUNG RICHARD HERFORD.

TWICE Justin fixed the day for returning to Herford, and twice it was put off at the last moment, after all the preparations had been made for receiving them with a festive welcome. Mrs. Herford was naturally very much annoyed, though she had partly forgotten her original grievance, and after one or two severe bronchial attacks, had graciously conceded that perhaps Dr. Vye had been right in prohibiting a London season. But the prolonged absence of Justin and Pansy was a fresh injury, and their indecision as to the time of their return added fuel to the fire. It was ridiculous to erect arches of evergreens and spring flowers down the village street, and see them wither away in the warm sunshine twice over. When Justin and Pansy come home now, said Mrs. Herford, they must just come like ordinary people—the Cunliffes for instance.

The second set of decorations were fading fast; the laurels hung limp, and the flowers were shedding their petals, in spite of all the efforts of the village

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children, who kept them well watered. But they looked bright and gay at a distance, as Leah Dart thought, when she caught sight of them from the cliffs lying between Herford and Rillage. The crisis of Squire Lynn's illness had long been past, but Leah retained her place as nurse during his slow and fitful recovery from it, and this was the first real holiday she had had since entering upon her duties. Her long confinement in the Squire's sick room had probably made her more than usually susceptible to the influences of the soft fresh air, and cheerful sunshine, and gleeful songs of birds. She paused in the cool shadow of the wall under the terrace walk at the Court to look down on the valley below, with its almost dazzlingly white road stretching up from the bay, and running between green hedgerows till it turned out of sight round the spur of the hill. The village street looked joyous and gay, with its triumphal arches and small colored banners fluttering in the breeze from the sea, for she was too far away to see the fading of the flowers and the weather stains upon the flags. A long scarlet streamer floated from the square tower of the lighthouse, and every sailing boat on the beach sported a bright pennon on its masthead. The church bells were chiming for evening service, and the clang of the bells sounded up to her ears with a tone of solemn mirth. In Leah's life-time there had never occurred any occasion for decorating her native village; no coming of age, and

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no marriage of the heir. But she had heard often of the great rejoicing that had been made when Richard Herford was born; and the tears started to her black eyes as she looked and listened.

"If it was only for Master Dick comin' back," she said aloud, "I'd be almost willin' to die."

There was a rustling in the ivy overhead, which made her look up quickly, and she saw the faces of Mrs. Herford and Jenny Cunliffe bent inquisitively over the wall above her.

"Oh, it's you, Leah!" said Mrs. Herford. "We heard voices, and we wished to see who was there. Why! you must have been talking to yourself!"

"Yes, ma'am; I just said a word or two, and maybe you heard 'em," answered Leah.

"No; I did not, indeed," replied Mrs. Herford.

"Them arches and flags," said Leah, fixing her glittering eyes on Mrs. Herford's face, "made me think of Master Dick. There's been no rejoicing since he was born; and I was thinkin' of him, and his merry ways, and his handsome face, God bless it! And to think his doited old father should cut him off from his own lands! We poor folks could never have done that! It's the quality that's hard upon their own flesh and blood."

"It was very hard, Leah," whimpered Mrs. Herford, "but I hadn't a word to say to it. Mr. Herford never asked what I thought of it; poor dear boy!"

"I suppose all that's for Master Justin," contin-

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ued Leah, pointing disdainfully at the decorations. "When is he comin' back from London, ma'am? Is it soon?"

"I don't know when they are coming," answered Mrs. Herford; "they have put it off twice, and I'll prepare for them no more. How is the old Squire, Leah?"

"He's been awful tedious," she replied. "It's not fit for Miss Di to be with him often; he worries her as he daren't worry me. I've sent her away scores o' times lookin' as white as a curtain. He's took down my color and my strength a little, though I've got the upper hand of him. I feel as weak as a kitten this evenin', and ready to cry any minute. Miss Jenny, do you see anybody comin' down the road into the village?"

The white road lay clear and sunny in the light all along its course; and a few minutes before a man's figure had come into sight. He was loitering, and had not advanced many paces nearer to the village. It was the point where Herford, with its closed-in little bay and shining sandy beach first caught the eye of any traveller descending the valley. Whether he was a stranger or a native returning after being away from home, it must have been a very matter-of-fact, unsentimental person, who, coming suddenly upon this glimpse of Herford, did not pause a little to look down admiringly on its peaceful beauty. This wayfarer had been sauntering slowly towards the

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village and was now standing still, with his face towards it. He was too far away for them to distinguish more than his general appearance, but in height and bearing he was like the master of Herford.

"It's Mr. Herford!" said Jenny shyly, not with the frank outburst of surprise of a few weeks ago. "But where is Pansy? and why is he coming home on foot?"

"Hush!" cried Leah, "wait! Oh, Lord! Lord! it can't be true."

She had turned very pale, and both her hands were pressed against her beating heart. Her straining eyes were rivcted on the figure in the distance. She looked frightened, yet eager and triumphant. The last note of the church bells echoed along the valley; and then the wayfarer moved on again.

"It's him come back!" screamed Leah; "it's Master Dick!"

"Leah! Leah!" cried Mrs. Herford, "who is it? What did you say? My boy! Oh! take me to him! Bring him here, quick, quick! Where is he?"

But Leah did not answer. She was shading her eyes with her hands, shutting out every object from their vision, except the one spot where the tall dark figure was standing, for he had paused once more, as if uncertain what course to take. It would have been impossible for Leah to speak just then. The deep devotion she had cherished for Richard Herford from her earliest girlhood made her dumb. She had

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never betrayed it to any one; and now she must be on her guard, if indeed it was true that this far-off indistinct form, standing irresolute in the evening light, should prove to be the long-lost son. Her eyelids were smarting with unshed tears, but she forced them to look steadily into the distance. The height, and the vigorous, upright bearing were like Master Justin; but there was a slight, indescribable difference, perceptible to her eager eyes. He did not come onward with the quiet, assured step of a master, drawing near to his own doors. This wanderer loitered and lingered on his way, as one to whom no house is open, except an inn. Leah drew a long deep sigh of mingled agony and gladness, and lifted up her pale face to Mrs. Herford and Jenny, who were watching her, open-eyed and wondering.

"It's Master Dick!" she said again, in an unsteady voice; "he's come home at last!"

Without another word she darted from them, and sped downward into the valley, along the drive through a coppice of young trees, planted by Justin since he came into possession. She was as light-footed and swift on this errand as she had ever been in the days of her girlhood. She must reach him before he entered the village. There was no one else to welcome him; not even his own mother, she thought bitterly. He was come back from his long wanderings; and there was no place for him in his own home, and under his own roof!

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She gained the white road before he passed the gate at the entrance of the drive; and she stood under the hawthorn hedge waiting for his approach, her breath coming and going, and her hands pressed again upon her heavily throbbing heart. She could see him plainly now, a tall, athletic, powerful-looking man, with a sunburnt face, and with large brown hands, swinging with every step he took. She felt her throat was dry, and her lips were parched; but as he came up to her, she dropped him an old-fashioned curtsy; a salutation she had not deigned to bestow on any personage since her early childhood. He looked at her inquisitively and stood still.

"Master Dick!" she gasped, with tremulous lips.

"Do you know me then?" he asked, with a flash of pleasure over his sunburnt face. "Yes! I'm Richard Herford. But I do not remember you!"

"I'm Leah Dart," she faltered, still too agitated to answer steadily. "I used to mind the geese on the cliffs."

"Ah! I recollect," he said.

He walked on down the road, the evening light casting his long shadow behind him; whilst she followed a step or two behind, too breathless to venture upon speaking again. There was a sense of blank disappointment tugging at her heart. It was as if a cup had been lifted to the lips of one parched with thirst, and found to be empty. Her long years of faithful yearning and waiting for his return were

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over; and this was the end of them! There had been a headlong, panting rush to welcome him home; and now nothing but a feeling of dull dissatisfaction. She had not even touched his hand. His face had brightened for a moment at her recognition of him; but he was tramping on again, not looking round at her. His dress was very old and shabby; and the heavy boots he had on his feet were much worn, and white with dust. But he did not look altogether like a tramp. His step and bearing were those of a gentleman, thought Leah; and her heart melted again into tenderness.

"Master Dick," she said softly, "don't go through the village like that! Don't go there at all!"

"Where am I to go?" he asked, turning round sharply. "Is there nobody in Herford will give me a night's lodging?"

"Oh!" she sobbed, "your mother's watchin' and waitin' for you. We saw you a long way off, and I ran to meet you, and bid you welcome. Come straight up to the Court, Master Dick. Come along the new drive that Master Justin's made, and nobody 'ill see you in the village. You oughtn't to be seen like that."

He turned quickly about and entered the drive, whilst Leah crept behind him, not secretly, but humbly and deprecatingly; like a dog that has been chidden, but not absolutely forbidden to follow his master. She knew it would be better for her to

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carry out her first intention, and pay her old mother a visit; but she could not bear to let him go on without her. She must see for herself how he was received at home. It was all pain to her; but the pain of being away from him in this hour of his return would be the keenest.

"Is my brother at home?" he inquired, as they came in sight of the Court.

"No, he's away in London," she answered eagerly, "him and Miss Pansy. There's only your mother at home. Oh! Master Dick! I wish you'd come back master!"

"I'm come back a beggar," he muttered, more to himself than to her. She felt all the hardness and bitterness of his lot. The old-fashioned, many-gabled house, with its deep bay windows, and its pleasant gardens stretching round it, stood just before them. Sloping meadows rose behind it, with flocks of sheep straying about them in the fading sunshine. Leah saw it with newly opened eyes. The young master of it all had returned, and had no share in it. He was coming home a beggar!

There was no mother watching for him at the door; that was plain. But a servant stood looking out, who instantly vanished as he came in sight. Leah still pressed close behind him, quite up to the hall door, where he paused, as if he would not cross his own threshold unbidden. Leah saw Jenny Cunliffe coming forward quickly, and Richard instantly

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took off his old cap, and stood bareheaded before her. A sharp, keen pang shot through her, as Jenny came on, with a bright color on her young face, and with eager, outstretched hand, which she offered frankly to the stranger.

"You are Mrs. Herford's long-lost son!" she exclaimed, with a fresh, girlish warmth in her manner. "You are to come to her at once. She fainted when Leah said it was you; and she's lying on the sofa. Come, come quickly."

He was hurried away out of Leah's sight, without once glancing back, or addressing a single word to her. She could follow him no farther; and turning slowly away, she retraced her path over the cliffs to Rillage, weeping tears of mingled bitterness and joy as she went.

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CHAPTER XVIII.

AT HOME AGAIN.

IT was dusk the next evening when Justin and Pansy reached Lowborough by the last train. Pansy had proposed taking the village and the Court by surprise, and not running the risk of disappointing them again. She was young and fond of surprises, still believing them to be generally pleasant events. They had to hire a conveyance from Lowborough; and as there was a fair at Mitcham, twelve miles away, conveyances and horses were scarce. After a short delay an old-fashioned gig was produced, drawn by a slow-stepping hack, reluctant to increase the distance between himself and his stall, and ignorant of the superior comfort of the Herford stables, where he was to stay till morning. In this homely fashion did the master of Herford and his daughter return home after their brilliant season in London.

It had been the most brilliant time in the life of each of them. Justin had never stood so high in his

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own estimation, or in that of his acquaintances. He had developed quite unexpected popular gifts both in society and on the platform. On the latter he had been undoubtedly one of the best unprofessional orators; and his aid had been ardently sought in the getting up of public meetings. In the society he had entered he had been equally successful; a favorite both with men and women. There had been a hint or two dropped that in case of an election for the borough of Lowborough, which was looked forward to as near at hand, his party would make strenuous efforts to get him returned, and snatch the seat from the opposite side, which had held possession of it for the last thirty years.

Pansy too had had an undisputed success in the few circles her father had consented for her to enter. She had spent a good deal of her time with Lady Fortescue, who had frequently expatiated to Justin on the sweetness and charming simplicity of his pretty little daughter. To Pansy the last three months had been a time of undreamed-of bliss. Yet her father had noticed of late that she was growing a little more shy of him; a trifle less frank and open in her merry chatter. Her manner had been quieter and more dreamy, and he felt half afraid that her sojourn in town had not altogether agreed with her, in spite of the dainty freshness of her color and the soft, clear luster of her eyes. He had surprised the trace of tears upon her face this morning, when they were leaving

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London; and those tears of hers had weighed somewhat heavily on his spirits all day.

They were both rather quiet as their poor hack shambled along the moonlit lanes, so intensely quiet after the crowded streets of London. There was scarcely a creature to be seen along the roads, nor a sound to be heard, except the whirring of the night-jar in the coppices, and the hooting of owls calling to one another from the barnyards they passed. Now and then the soft, noiseless wings of an owl passed swiftly by them; or with sharp and jerky flight a bat flitted past. Presently they turned the spur of the hill, which brought them into sight of Herford, and Justin checked his horse, which was only too willing to stand still. The little village was bathed in moonlight, with the dark cliffs behind clearly outlined against the cloudless sky, and the foam breaking against them sparkling in the white light.

"Oh, father!" cried Pansy, "how delicious it is to be at home again! Oh, I did not know how much I love Herford!"

"What, crying, Pansy?" he said in a tone of distress.

"For joy," she sobbed, "only for joy. Don't let us ever go away again, you and me. Is there anything worth going away for?"

Justin shifted the reins into his other hand to put his arm round his little girl, and draw her pretty head down upon his breast. Pansy had never known

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her mother, and he had always shown a motherly tenderness towards her. She lay there weeping for a minute or two, while he soothed her fondly, telling her she should never go away but when she pleased. Then Pansy roused herself, and as they drove on she greeted every familiar object with a merry and tender notice. The faded arches still spanning the road were the only strange sight, and she laughed a low and tremulous laugh as they passed under them.

"They'll be glad to have us back, daddy," she said, nestling close to his side.

"Thank God we are at home again!" he answered with a deep sigh of enjoyment. After all, here was his own place, though he had made a name in a few cliques in the great throng of London, and found himself a greater man than he had anticipated. This was his real home; the spot where his life had struck its deepest roots. It was the nest whither all his affections and interests returned to roost by an instinct as true and unfailing as that which brought the swallows back to their homes under his eaves as surely as the spring came.

"Why, father!" exclaimed Pansy, "what can grandmamma be doing at the Court?"

They had passed through the coppice of young trees, and all the front of Herford Court stood out before them in the mellow moonlight. But there was no need of the moonlight to show up the house. It was aglow with lights from within. The tall,

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narrow casements of the drawing-room were glittering, and the bay-windows of the dining-room cast a yellow light upon the climbing plants growing about them. Pansy broke into a soft, rippling laugh.

"She is giving a dinner party," she said, "and we shall take them by surprise."

There was a gate in the way, shutting off the lawn from the coppice, and Justin called to one of the farm servants whom be saw crossing the yard a little below the Court. The man was in no hurry to open the gate wide enough for his master to drive through. He realized too keenly how great a personage he should be in Herford if he was the first to tell Master Justin the news.

"Master," he said impressively, with his hand on the shaft, as if to check any further advance till all was told, "there's great tidings! Master Dick's come back; ay, that he is, and mistress is feasting him, and making him as welcome as flowers in May. The bells have been ringing all day. Hark! there they be at it again."

The merry peals of bells rang out into the quiet moonlight, and Justin leaned back and listened. He could not speak, and no one else broke the first silence. Blake, having blurted out his news, was intently observant of his master's first impressions so far as he should betray them. Pansy was taken utterly by surprise. The fresh keen air from the sea, the silver

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moonlight, the white village below them, the sweet odor of the hawthorn, and the gay sparkling house above stamped themselves indelibly upon her memory. She was often, in after times, to recur to this moment, during which she sat dumb, looking up into her father's face, whilst the bells clanged and jangled, and resounded from the echoing cliffs, jarring in mad merriment.

"Blake," said her father at last, in a strange and constrained voice, "drive Miss Pansy on to the house; I have forgotten to call at the vicarage."

His head felt giddy, and his feet staggered as he alighted from the conveyance. In this valley below him, in his friend's study window, a light was burning under the eaves. It looked like a beacon shining across stormy and dark waters. He must get down quickly to his friend yonder, if it were only to gain a few minutes of deliberation. He could not face his brother in so sudden a fashion.

"Father," cried Pansy, rousing up from her dumb surprise, "won't you come in with me?"

"I cannot, my darling," he said in a tone of unconscious sadness; "go on without me, Pansy, I shall be in soon enough, but I must run down and see Cunliffe. We ought to have stayed for a minute there first, but I did not think of it."

"Must I meet Uncle Dick alone?" she asked; but he did not answer. He was holding the reins for Blake to take his place beside her, and he opened

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the gate for them himself. There was something extraordinary and inexplicable to Pansy in his conduct, but she had not much time for wondering. In another minute or two she was at the hall door of the Court, and Jenny Cunliffe was flying with open arms to meet her. Behind her Mrs. Herford was coming with slow steps, and with her a stranger, dressed in her father's clothes, and closely resembling him at first sight.

"Uncle Dick!" cried Pansy, stretching out her hands and running to him eagerly. There had been little romance in her life, Pansy was in the habit of thinking; it was a quiet, tranquil, monotonous life, and what little romance there was, had been all bound up with the idea of her father's missing brother. She had very early learned that she must not ask too many questions about her uncle, but this secrecy and mystery had enhanced the interest surrounding him. It had not been explained to her that her father was not the son of that withered, bent old man whom she dimly remembered as her grandfather; and she had no idea that he had succeeded to an estate which, by natural descent, should have gone to his half-brother. Pansy had thought of Richard only as being a poor, impetuous, high-spirited boy, driven from home by his father's tyranny. Now that he was come home, after all these long years of absence—years of peril and hardship she was sure they had been—she was ready to give him the warmest welcome of her affectionate nature. She ran to meet

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him, seeing no one else, and scarcely seeing him. Her fair young face was flushed and her eyes sparkling with tears. She clasped his hand between both her own, and lifted up her face to his, too much agitated to speak the words of welcome trembling on her lips. Richard Herford stooped down hesitatingly, almost reluctantly, and kissed her with an air of reverence, as if it would be more fitting for him to bend his knee to her and kiss her hand.

"Can this be Pansy?" he asked; "little Heartsease I used to call her. Ah! I've never forgotten you calling after me as I went up the valley when I was running away! A bonny little lass of three. 'Come back, Uncle Dick, come back! come back!' I can hear the child's voice still. And I've come back at last, little Heartsease."

"Thank God!" murmured Pansy.

"God bless you!" exclaimed Dick, the tears starting to his eyes, which had not felt the smart of them since he was a boy.

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CHAPTER XIX.

THE ELDER BROTHER.

IN the meanwhile Justin was making his way, as if in a miserable and bewildering dream, in the direction of his friend's beckoning lamp. It was the mechanical result of habit, which always took him there in any unexpected turn of affairs. The Vicarage was as familiar to him as the Court, and Philip Cunliffe was more his comrade and friend, his equal in all respects, than any other man on earth. If Diana had been dwelling as near to him he would have turned his bewildered steps to her, and probably he would have revealed and confessed all that was in his heart to her. But it was too late to go over the cliffs to Rillage, and his mind was not yet sufficiently recovered from the shock it had received to think of anything but how he might gain a little time. He was turning his back upon a meeting inexpressibly distasteful and trying to him, and instinct guided him to the only friend near at hand who could in the least understand him.

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The Vicarage was apparently deserted; there was no Babel of voices in any of the rooms, and no one looked through any door as he entered and straightway ascended the staircase to the little attic in the roof, which Mr. Cunliffe had chosen for his study. It looked more like a tent than a room, for to please Pansy the sloping ceiling, which descended almost to the skirting-board, had been painted in bright, broad stripes, and a thick Persian carpet covered the floor. In the centre was a small writing table, on which a lamp was standing. The low dormer window was thrown wide open, showing a field of deep blue sky studded with stars, among which the moon was riding attended by a soft luminous cloud. The all-prevalent under-tone of the sea sounded deeper and purer here than in the village street, and the only sounds mingling with it were the occasional jangling of the bells in the church tower close by.

Mr. Cunliffe was deeply intent upon his book. His high, narrow forehead rested upon a thin, white hand, whilst the other was laid flat upon the old volume on his desk. It was evident that he was too absorbed to hear either the bells, or the entrance of his friend. Justin closed the door behind him, but he did not look up. His lips moved slightly, as if forming the words beneath his eye, or whispering some brief, half-unconscious prayer. It was a deep sigh from Justin that at last aroused him, and he lifted up his head, fixing his pre-occupied eyes upon him at first

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with a dreamy abstraction, but waking with a sudden start into keen concern and watchfulness.

"Justin!" he exclaimed, "what is the matter with you?"

"I have had a blow," he answered in an unsteady tone. He felt as if he had received a blow literally, and was staggering under its force. Mr. Cunliffe sprang up and pushed him into his own chair.

"Is it Pansy?" he asked in a choked voice; "has anything happened to Pansy?"

"No, no," said Justin recovering himself a little; "Pansy is all right, thank God! But Philip, my brother has come back after all these years."

"And is that a blow to you?" cried his friend.

"It is a great blow to me," answered Justin; "a terrible misfortune."

A fresh outburst of the bells suddenly filled the attic with their deafening clangor. Justin laid his arms upon the desk and dropped his face upon them. For a minute or two Mr. Cunliffe gazed at him with an almost blank stare of astonishment, and then he moved away from him to the little casement in the roof, and looked across the valley to the glittering windows of the house on the opposite cliff. All day long there had been in his heart a deep, subtle, all-pervading sense of almost heavenly happiness and love. He was witnessing a living parable of the love of God towards His returning prodigals. The house yonder had thrown its door wide open to receive its

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long-lost son, and all the mirth and gladness that had surrounded him had seemed but the counterpart and similitude of the rejoicing in the presence of God over a repentant sinner. Such a day of realizing the unseen and eternal realities had seldom fallen to his lot, and he had been rapt away into a trance of spiritual ecstasy, from which Justin's entrance had roughly and painfully recalled him to earth and its contradictions.

"Justin!" he exclaimed in a tone of bitter anguish, as if the cry had been wrung from the very depths of his heart, "Justin, can you be a Christian?"

It was the poignant grief of his friend's voice, rather than his words, that smote on Justin's ear. He lifted up his head, and showed a face disturbed by contending emotions. The tranquil, prosperous, satisfied expression had already faded away from his handsome features. He looked anxious and bewildered; but he was no longer stunned by his blow. His brain was bestirring itself; but at this moment it exerted itself only on the words that Philip Cunliffe had just uttered. He looked across at him with an air of anger and indignation.

"How can you ask me if I am a Christian?" he said; "you, who know what my life has been! Who has seen me plan and toil for the good of all about me, if you have not? Am I not a good son, a good father, a good landlord, a good friend,

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Philip? You know, if any man knows, whether I have shirked any call of duty. Do not you know what my faith is? I hold the same creed that you do; I am a priest in orders, as you are. Surely if any friends ever took sweet counsel together, and walked to the house of God in company, it is you and I who have done so. Why do you ask me if I can be a Christian?"

His voice faltered as he repeated the question, with a secret and irresistible doubt. What had his religious life been if it had not really been subject to the laws of Christ? He was well known as a religious man; he owed much of his influence to his reputation for piety. There were few men of his acquaintance who so fairly deserved the name of Christian. Yet his heart shrank and fell as he tried to look at himself, and at the long, prosperous course his life had run till now.

"Justin," said his friend, in a voice almost as low and quiet as the voice of his conscience, "if a younger brother of Christ's had been lost to Him for many years—lost in sin, and misery, and estrangement—would he have felt it as a terrible misfortune when he came home again?"

"No, no; impossible!" he answered.

"'I know thy works, and charity, and service, and faith, and thy patience,'" quoted Philip Cunliffe, "who should know them better than I? But there must be something wrong with you, Justin.

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To be a true Christian is to think as Christ thought, to feel as He felt, to live as He lived. It is to have the same mind that was in Him; to be, all of us, as Christ in the world; each one in our own sphere of duty. To forget ourselves is to remember Christ; to forsake all is to follow Him. It is a height far above me, but I am reaching forward to it; and the summit is all glory, and peace, and joy. But oh! Justin, it is far above me yet."

"It is immeasurably above me," groaned Justin as his head sank again upon his hands. "I thought I was one of His loyal disciples, but I feel now as if I had never heard His voice calling me."

"Is it a dark hour?" asked his friend's quiet voice.

"It is utter darkness," he answered. "Have I been false, or is religion all a lie? I have no hold on Christ at this moment. Is it possible that He has never reached out His hand to me? Have I been building my house on sand, whilst I believed I was on a rock?"

"Have you seen your brother yet?" asked Philip Cunliffe.

"No," he answered, looking up again; "the news struck me down as if I had had a blow. I could not face him just then, and I sent Pansy on to meet him first. No one on earth knows the trouble and difficulty lying before me; and I cannot tell you to-night, Philip."

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"But you will go home and welcome your brother?" he said.

"I must," he replied, "and the sooner the better. I ran down here to gain a moment's breathing time. Have you seen him?"

"Yes," said Mr. Cunliffe; "we had a short thanksgiving service this morning, and all the village came to the church. He seemed deeply moved, even to tears; I could hear his voice joining in the prayers. We cannot judge yet; but there is hope that he is weary of his long career of willfulness, and is come home a changed man. I have been thinking of him all day, coming back penniless, and foot-sore, and travel-stained, to find no father to bid him welcome. That must be a bitter blank to him."

"He could not expect to find his father alive," said Justin, somewhat sternly; "but I must go and see him for myself, I suppose. I hope to Heaven he is a changed man; for he will do little good to himself or any one else if he is not changed. He was a shallow, obstinate, selfish lad when he went away; and if he remains the same as a man, God forgive me! but I cannot rejoice at his coming back again."

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CHAPTER XX.

LOOKING BACK.

JUSTIN retraced his path homeward slowly. The time had not come yet for confronting the dim questions of right and wrong, which were beginning to awaken into life in his brain. At present he must concentrate himself on the duty immediately before him, which he could not delay any longer; that of seeing his unwelcome brother, and giving him a reception as nearly approaching a welcome as could be.

The hall-door stood open, as it always did during the summer months, and he entered his home unnoticed. The drawing-room door was open too, and he could see the group within, whilst remaining unseen himself. Pansy had thrown off her hat and mantle, which were tossed carelessly aside on a chair, and was sitting beside her uncle, with her blue eyes fastened upon him as he spoke. Mrs. Herford was gazing at him with an unusual tenderness in her expression; and Jenny Cunliffe was listening to the traveller's stories with rapt attention. These women

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were petting him, and spoiling him already. Justin could not help owning that he was a good-looking, animated, and attractive scapegrace. There was not a trace of the returning prodigal about him. He was wearing one of Justin's own suits, and wore it with an air of proprietorship, altogether different from the awkward and embarrassed aspect of a man dressed in borrowed clothing. His face was lit up with smiles; and he was talking with a happy fluency of his wandering life. Pansy's rosy lips were parted, as if she could scarcely breathe, until the exciting narrative of his adventures was ended. Justin felt that if he could have seen his brother ragged, and travel-stained, and troubled, as Philip Cunliffe had depicted him, he might more easily have received him to his heart. But here was the same Richard as of old, not another; self-satisfied and shallow-hearted; quite content with the present moment, having no penitence for the past, and no earnest resolution of amendment in the future.

"There is my father!" cried Pansy, starting up as he passed over the threshold, and hastening to drag him forward to his brother; "Uncle Dick is come home again after all these years; poor Uncle Dick!

She pronounced the last words shyly, and looked from one to the other with an innocent delight shining through her eyes. She almost expected to see them fall upon one another's neck, and embrace

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each other, like the pictures she had seen of the lost son welcomed home again. Mrs. Herford looked on with a momentary thrill of terror agitating her calm self-complacency. Here were these two sons of hers meeting: Justin the usurper, and Richard, the rightful heir. How would they meet one another? How would they adjust their contending claims? Would Justin give his brother welcome, or would he order him out of the house—the house he had forfeited? Would Richard fire up, as he had been wont to do, and meet Justin with a tempest of accusation and reproach? The terror deepened upon her as her two sons looked steadily into one another's faces in silence, before Justin stretched out his hand to Richard.

"Well, Justin?" said Richard haughtily.

"Welcome home, Richard," he said slightly emphasizing the word home. That was their greeting after nearly fifteen years' separation; but Mrs. Herford heaved a deep sigh of relief, whilst Pansy's look of innocent delight changed into one of intense astonishment. The little party broke up very soon after, for Richard could not resume his jaunty, light-hearted talk in Justin's gloomy presence. Pansy lingered behind the others for a minute or two with her father, whose grave face had awakened already some vague misgivings. She laid her hands upon his shoulders, and looked at him with all her soul in her clear eyes. It seemed as if she had some ques-

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tion to ask, which she could not put into words, and which no words of his could answer. He gazed back into the depths of her appealing eyes unflinchingly, until the thin, blue-veined lids closed on them, and Pansy hid her face on his breast, clinging to him with a deprecating tenderness in her clasp.

"Father!" she murmured, "are not you glad to have him home again?"

"Not yet, my darling," he answered solemnly; "pray God I may be some day!"

Then Pansy kissed him again and again, and silently went her way, and left him alone.

He was quite alone at last; all the house was quiet with the quietness of night following close upon the cheerful sounds of day. The drawing-room, a pretty, pleasant room, filled with such knick-knacks as a young girl like Pansy loves to gather about her, kept the traces of its recent occupants. The chairs were drawn up beside his mother's sofa, where they had been sitting in a happy group, until his entrance broke it up. The windows were still open to admit the scented evening air, though a fire was burning on the hearth; and Justin drew his seat up to it, as if he felt cold, and sat down with his chin resting on his hands, and his eyes staring into the glowing embers.

He had no absolutely new subject for consideration. He could recall hour after hour of close deliberation in the earlier years of his possession, when he had gone

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through all the arguments for and against himself, never coming to a definite verdict or decision. He had frequently bewildered and perplexed himself with the question of what he must do if Richard ever came home. If Richard came home! But he was come now; and the subject of deliberation had changed into a point on which action was necessary. He could no longer pursue the even tenor of his way, without settling to his own satisfaction, whether it was the right way or not. "There is a way that seemeth good unto a man; but the end of that way is death." Justin was suddenly forced to look at the end; and the misgivings that had been lulled to slumber in his soul were awaking into vigorous life.

Was he now to act upon old Richard Herford's will, as it had been written under the influence of strong and bitter resentment against his truant son; or upon old Richard Herford's will, as he knew it to be, when the old man's dim eyes made the mistake which consigned the wrong document to the flames?

The change in the father's mind, from resentment to forgiveness, had not made his son one whit fitter to succeed to the estate. There was not the shadow of a question that Justin was the better man; the one most qualified to carry on the name of the family into which he had been adopted, and to work out the greatest benefit to all concerned; even to Richard himself, if he continued to be the reckless spendthrift he had always been.

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This was no longer a subtle problem to be tracked through the mazes of his brain, and left at last in some dark lurking-place. It had leaped suddenly into a question of duty, to be clearly defined, and rigorously followed out. The son, who had despised and forfeited his birthright, was beneath the roof of his long line of forefathers. He was of the same blood as the first Herford who had built these strong walls generations ago, which now sheltered the last scion of their race. A long line of Herfords seemed to be trooping past him in the ghostly stillness of the night. Was it for a stranger, they had worked, and toiled, and saved? Did they reject their latest heir, because he had failed as a spoiled boy to fulfill the duties of his early manhood? There could be but one answer to that.

But it was not merely the dead Herfords and Richard he had to consider. There was his mother, who had no settlement made upon her by her husband's first will, which had left her utterly dependent upon Richard. And there was Pansy: he must think of her. She was the very daughter of the place; the flower and crown of it. He could no more think of Herford apart from Pansy, than he could imagine Pansy living anywhere but at Herford. All the fairness of the sky, and the sweetness of the air, and the luxuriance of the flowers seemed to centre in her. She had grown out of them all, like some rare blossom, that had had all favorable in-

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fluences playing about it. Could she exist in any other place? The faint, soft rose-bloom of her cheeks, and the richer crimson of her lips, and the clear shining of her eyes, would they not fade and pale in any other air? Pansy's heart would break if she must leave Herford; and was it just that Richard's delayed return, after fifteen years of willful absence, should push out those whose heart strings had wound round and round the place in happy memories, and innocent associations?

Justin saw now, looking back with mournfully keen eyes, that he had suffered himself to drift into this dangerous channel, rather than distinctly chosen to enter upon it. It had been easier, and had seemed wiser, to keep his own counsel, and suffer affairs to take their course, than to publish the mistake that had been made. That far-off time could not be recalled; and suddenly he discovered the heavy chain he had forged for himself. He was in the very prime of life; held in high esteem throughout the country; the best Herford of Herford that had ever lived within those old walls. There was not a fleck upon his reputation, nor an apparent flaw in his character. He had almost doubled the value of the estate, and had greatly increased the prosperity of his little village. His influence was great both in religious and political circles; and he exercised it with a scrupulous conscience. He was useful, and rejoiced in his usefulness. Was he to throw it all to the

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winds, and beggar himself, his mother, and Pansy, because a good-for-nothing scapegrace had seen fit to return from some far-off country, where he had wasted his life and substance in riotous living? If he did, Richard would soon squander the estate away, and go off on his wanderings again. What good would come of that to any one?

At this turn in his reflections, a subtle memory of familiar words stirred softly in his brain: "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. The light of the body is the eye; if, therefore, thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light. But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If, therefore, the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness! No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and Mammon."

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CHAPTER XXI.

LEAH DART'S SECRET.

RICHARD HERFORD was awake betimes the next morning. He had been thirty-six hours at home, and he was already growing weary of the decorum and propriety that reigned over it. Yesterday had appeared intolerably long to him, for his mother would barely let him out of her sight. She had insisted upon going with him when he made his inspection of the stables and farm-buildings; and he had had her on his arm when he went down into the village. Most of the men and women had greeted him warmly enough, but there had been no great enthusiasm of welcome, as there would have been for an heir coming into his estates. He had been received as a younger brother, whose going and coming made little difference to the tenants. It had not been so in his younger days.

It was with a sore heart that he walked about his father's fields alone this morning. He felt the value of what he had forfeited more keenly than he had ever done. There was not a drop of Herford blood

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in Justin's veins, he said to himself as he tramped doggedly along; yet here he was lord and master of every foot of Herford land. It was all very well for his mother to make a fuss over his return, and melt into tears, and break into laughter, and play a regular comedy about it. But Justin gave him a scant welcome, and turned him the cold shoulder. He was regarded as an interloper in his own home.

Richard knew before he came that his father's will was all regular and unassailable; and that there was no loop-hole through which he might hope to creep into his lost birthright. He had made sure of that years ago. But he had never felt how hard it was as he did now. He had a hungry craving for enjoyments that were quite beyond his reach. If this comfortable little estate was his by law, as it was by natural inheritance, what a figure he would cut in the county! Ay! in London itself, as long as his funds lasted. But what could a fellow do, without a penny in his pocket? It seemed more difficult to believe, now he was here once more, that his father could have kept his grudge against him to the last.

He wandered on aimlessly along the cliffs. The thick clumps of gorse were glowing, with their rich golden tints, in the early sunshine. Here and there he stood on the edge of a narrow ravine, dipping down into the sea, with the water tumbling to and fro with the tides in the chasm below. In every cleft grew some green outgrowth of the spring, con-

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cealing the gray and jagged points of the precipice under the ceaseless flutter of their leaves. A long scroll of dark clouds lay along the western horizon. Busy birds were flitting from bush to bush, and filling the morning stillness with their twitterings. The shadows from the sky slept upon the sea, moving slowly across it with the soft passing away of the clouds. It was supremely quiet. As far as his eye could reach the water was rippling gently, without a sail upon it to break the monotony. There was no sound except the singing of the birds and the ceaseless moan of the sea.

"By George!" he exclaimed, "it's enough to send a fellow to sleep for evermore! I must get some life into this place, or march off again, and make myself scarce. And what's the good of staying here, aggravating myself? I'll see what Justin's willing to do for me, and then I'll be off."

By this time he was high enough on the cliffs to look down upon Rillage Grange, nestling in its own little glen. The place was almost as familiar to him as Herford Court, for he had been a great favorite with Squire Lynn in his boyhood. He saw a woman leaving the house by the side entrance, and begin to climb the steep path which led to where he was. It could be no one else but Diana Lynn, who had been the object of his first boyish love. Richard loitered about to meet her, with a smile at his own folly; yet with his pulses throbbing a little faster, as this light-

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footed figure drew nearer. Jenny Cunliffe had told him the day before that Diana was the handsomest woman in the neighborhood. Excepting Pansy, Jenny added. Now he had seen Pansy he acknowledged that Diana might be very handsome, without being quite as lovely.

If Richard had no eyes for the beauty of a landscape, they were sharp enough for any fine point in a woman. Had Diana still that soft, colorless, creamy complexion, with those dark liquid eyes he remembered so well? It was certain she could not lose her shapely, well-poised head, and her stately presence, though she was no longer a young woman. She must be two years older than himself, and he was over thirty. Over thirty years of age! It was enough to make any fellow feel serious to be that age, and know he had not a penny to bless himself with. "'I cannot dig, and to beg I am ashamed,'" he muttered half aloud. "By George! that's in the Bible, and it's quite true!"

The woman was sufficiently near to him now for him to see that she was not Diana, but Leah Dart. Yet Leah was no unpleasing object to look upon. Her face was a rich brown, well shaped and handsome, and her bold black eyes were bright enough to invite a second glance. She had caught sight of him, and recognized his figure as it stood out clear against the sky on the brow of the cliff, and she was redoubling her speed to overtake him. There was some spirit

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in a woman who could tear along like that, he thought. It occurred to him that Leah had been the first to welcome him when he was tramping, footsore and heavy-hearted, down the road to Herford. He must wait and speak to her, and give her one of the gold pieces with which his mother had filled his purse yesterday; for Richard was lavish with his money when he had any, and he fancied he should like to see the glitter in Leah's eyes when the coin was transferred from his hand to hers.

"Good morning, Leah," he said as she approached him closely, panting and breathless, with her red lips parted and her cheeks flushed. "I never saw you again the other night; but I did not forget you. I wanted to give you a keepsake for being the first to welcome me home. Here, take this, and buy yourself a gown, or something or other."

Leah had not found her voice yet, but she turned away indignantly from the proffered gold. It seemed to her heartless in him to offer it to her, who had met him, ragged and almost barefoot, tramping homeward like a beggar.

"Put it up, Master Dick!" she cried as soon as she could speak; "put it up. I haven't kept you in my mind all these years to need anything like that for a keepsake. If you'd brought me any bit of a trifle from foreign parts, I'd have kept it till the last day of my life—ay, and had it buried with me in my coffin! Night and day you've never been out o' my

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mind, and do ye think I'll take money from you now?"

"By George!" he ejaculated, gazing curiously at the agitated woman.

"Nobody wanted ye back save me!" she went on eagerly; "they're a set o' traitors, every woman's son of 'em! Master Justin is the landlord for them. They've never given you a good word nor a good wish. 'A good riddance!' says they. 'He's the rightful heir, is Master Dick!' says I, 'and God Almighty will bring him back some day, and put him in his own place again!' And He has, bless His name!"

"I'm afraid He's had very little to do with my coming back," said Richard, "and He has not set me in my own place again."

"No; but I can put you in the way to get back your own," she answered.

"How can you do that?" he asked incredulously.

"Listen to me," she said in a low, eager voice, pressing near to him, lest she should be overheard even on the cliffs. "The day after th' old master died, towards evening-time, I was out here along these very cliffs, looking after the geese that had strayed away from the fallow-field, and who should I see but Master Justin comin' along i' the dusk. It was bleak and dull, and the wind was risin', and I wondered to see him goin' off to Rillage so soon after he was gone, only I knew he was courtin' Miss Di,

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and maybe he was eager to tell her all the news. But instead of goin' straight on, he kep' walkin' up and down, up and down, one way one minute, and the next way the next minute, all in the dusk and the cold, and I hid behind the furze, hardly knowin' why. I'd been full of you all day, thinkin' as how you'd come home again to be master, and there'd be good old times all over again, and I was overjoyed like. Well, I watched Master Justin pull a paper out o' his breast pocket and begin to tear it up into little tiny scraps, and strew them about as he wandered up and down. When that was done, and he was off to Rillage, I stole out, and searched up and down, walkin' where he walked, and pickin' up every scrap I could see. Some had blown away with the wind, and some had fallen over the cliff; but I lay down and crawled to the edge and stretched over as far as I durst and snatched up two or three off the brambles below me. It was almost dark, and when I came first thing in the morning, there wasn't one to be seen."

"And what have you done with them?" he asked, as eagerly as she had spoken.

"I've kep' them safe, every one," she replied. "I never durst tell nobody; for they're all traitors, and took Master Justin's side as soon as they heard he was to be master. But I can't make nothin' out of the bits; I'm no scholar. They're all here in a little silk bag I made on purpose, and they've never been

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out o' my bosom these ten years. If we could find some shelter, we could look at them at once."

"Yes, yes!" he said fiercely. "By heaven! I always suspected some foul play."

Leah's black eyes were riveted upon his face, and he could not fail to see that she had both a profound sympathy for him, and an equally profound belief in the importance of her communication. They sought a sheltered nook under the brow of the cliff, and he sat down beside her, while she emptied her little silk bag into her lap. It was a moment of intense happiness to Leah, one she had been dreaming of and looking forward to all these years, and the reality was more blissful than the anticipation. The possession of this little silk bag had been like a secret distinction to her, which had made her hold herself aloof from all her village suitors. She had given herself airs in the sight of all her world, and had often been laughed and jeered at for her assumption of superiority. The little seed of ambition sown many years ago had sprung into a great tree, and she was sitting under the shadow of it with great delight. The rightful heir of Herford was here, close beside her, bending over the treasured scraps of paper, and arranging them with more practiced fingers than her own. She could scarcely breathe for very happiness. Was she going to replace him in his lost inheritance? Would this cherished secret of hers make him again the master of Herford? If it did, how would he reward her?

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A blissful vision flashed across her excited brain of being his wife. Why not? Other women as lowly born as herself had married gentlemen of far higher degree than Richard Herford, who had never seemed as far removed from the men of her own class as Justin did. Leah would never have dreamed of marrying a learned, scholarly man; but Richard had always chosen the company of people below him, and accommodated himself to their ways. He was sitting now at her side in close contact, as any fisherman or farm-servant in Herford might have done, who was accustomed to rest under the first hedgerow, or ridge of rock. She had long been striving to make herself a lady, and she indulged the happy belief that she was very superior to the women of her own station. She was almost Richard's equal. Why should she not become his wife, and mistress of Herford, if she played her cards well?

As Leah dreamed these dreams, Richard diligently fitted in the morsels of yellow and stained paper upon her lap. Most of them were quite blank, with not a single character upon them. Those that contained some writing did not fall into consecutive places. Still there was sufficient to prove to him that the handwriting was his father's, and there was a date of which the last and least important figure was missing—Feb. 10, 184. He found also the word my, and the half-word wi—. Richard stared at these fragments with a blank and puzzled expression, not

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with the triumphant air Leah was hoping for. She ventured to lay her brown hand upon his, to arouse his attention.

"What is it?" she asked, "what do you make out? Is it th' old master's will?"

"I can't make it out," answered Richard, "but there's some foul play in it, I'll swear. I never believed my father would cut me off, his only son. No, no. You're a jewel, Leah. I shall never forget what you've done for me. How can I repay you? Tell me, for I'm ready to do anything you ask—in reason."

He dropped his voice over the last words, and Leah did not catch them. She shrank from the idea of having gold offered to her again by him; no lady could take money for any service she might render. Her color came and went, as he looked at her for a reply.

"Not now," she said; "wait till you're master of Herford again, and then I'll tell you. What are you goin' to do with these papers?"

"By George!" he exclaimed, "I hardly know. Leave that to me, Leah; and good-by to you."

He touched the brown cheek next to him carelessly with his lips, and sprang away laughing; while Leah Dart looked after him with the shining of unspeakable happiness in her eyes.

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CHAPTER XXII.

TWO LETTERS.

IT was late that morning when Justin came down to the sunny breakfast-room, which be found deserted. Richard had ridden over to Lowborough, he was told, and Pansy and Jenny were unpacking the luggage from London, which had just arrived, under Mrs. Herford's superintendence. He was glad to be alone. The feverish and fitful sleep that had visited him had refreshed neither mind nor body. His spirits had been exhausted by the sharp mental conflict of the night before, and he felt it a relief to be spared the effort of keeping up a conversation. He found himself anxious, preoccupied and undecided. He felt himself altogether at a loss; a strange experience for Justin, whose intuitions were swift and clear, and his decisions equally sharp and defined. A voice from heaven would have suited him at this juncture, but there is no voice audible to ears deafened by the world. The world's trumpets had been braying too lately around him, for him to hear the low still voice, full of awe, which calls us out of the darksome cave wherein we dwell, into the light of God.

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A servant came in to bring him the letter-bag, which did not reach Herford till late in the morning. There was a letter for himself, and another for Pansy, which he sent at once to her. His own lay before him on the table for a while, his troubled heart and busy brain still pondering over his present difficulty. At last he took it up, and the color mounted to his pale and anxious face, for it brought a fresh complication to be dealt with.

"DEAR HERFORD—My son and I called at your hotel a few minutes after you left to-day. I must therefore write to you instead of speaking, and I must do it with equal frankness. Our young people, it seems, have formed an attachment to each other, and Robert gives me no peace till I lay the matter before you. I need not say that your daughter is all I could desire for my son's wife. We should welcome her most cordially into our family. But I am compelled to own that Robert must marry a wife with some considerable dowry. Miss Herford is everywhere regarded as your only child and heiress, but it is absurd to take it for granted that a man of your age will never marry again. Consequently it is incumbent upon you and me to come to some definite understanding before either of us gives our consent to the young folks. I am disposed to believe you have no objection to my son. You saw a good deal of him while you were in town, and I can only add, if

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this marriage is as agreeable to you as it is to me, we may set the lawyers to work at once.

"Yours truly,

"R. FORTESCUE."

Justin tossed the letter from him with a gesture of impatience. Why! Pansy was but a child still; a little, innocent, heedless girl, into whose head no thought of a lover could come. It seemed but yesterday that she was sitting on his knee and reading stories of fairies and mermaids in her shrill, childish voice. He could not entertain the idea of his little Pansy loving any man but himself. There was so much dainty, natural charm about Pansy that must be spoiled, he thought, if it was displayed to any other eyes but his own, her father's. It was unutterably delightful to him to feel her soft arms about his neck, and her pretty head nestling upon his shoulder. He could not endure the thought of her so caressing any other man.

Yet if Pansy was ever to marry and leave him, no match could be better than this one. Young Fortescue was heir to a good estate, a little encumbered, as Justin knew, and to his father's baronetcy. Pansy's new home would be within ten miles of Herford: a pleasant distance. He had not looked at the young man as a probable suitor for his daughter, but all he had observed of him was favorable. The letter he had just read from his father implied that an attach-

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ment was already formed; if so, Pansy was in love. Pansy in love was a fresh element of anxiety and sorrow.

It seemed almost a shocking thing to Justin to be compelled to ask his young daughter if she loved this unwelcome candidate for her hand. It needed a mother's delicate tenderness, he fancied. How could Pansy tell him what she felt for the young man, who had been an utter stranger to her three months ago? Three months ago! Was it possible the child could learn to love any one in so short a time? All the other affections of her life had developed slowly, and struck root naturally. There might be some mistake, and he was being anxious about a chimera. They had taken Pansy's freedom from conventional shyness and reserve, for a sign that she had given away her heart to the first suitor that came.

But Pansy had had a letter, possibly from young Fortescue himself. Justin summoned all his resolution and courage to aid him in asking his little daughter this unpleasant question. It was part of his chivalrous devotion to his motherless child not to send a formal message by a servant bidding her come to him, but to go himself to seek her. Pansy's room was one she had chosen when they first came to Herford Court, because of an oriel window in it, raised two or three steps from the floor, and looking out upon the sea. It was a low, spacious room under the roof, with long and narrow casements, giving glimpses of the

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country lying about the house. She had hoarded here all the treasures she had gathered during her life. The plume of peacock's feathers, that had charmed her eyes years ago, was still preserved and cherished, and every shelf and window-sill was crowded with the foreign curiosities brought for her by every sailor Herford-born, who had carried them over sea and land as an offering for their Miss Pansy. Her mother's water-color sketches, stiff and raw in color, hung upon the walls, with her father's school-boy drawings of boats, and crags, and water, destitute of perspective and devoid of shadow. The whole place was filled with keepsakes and trifles of no value save in Pansy's eyes. A mere lumber-room if she was not in it; but in her presence it was like a shrine, to which every poor votary had brought some willing offering.

Pansy was sitting in the oriel window, gazing out with soft, dreamy eyes over the sea. The letter was folded caressingly between her small white hands. The pretty head, and rounded chin, and sunny curls, were clearly defined against the sky, and Justin stood on the threshold for a few moments, looking at her with a keen pang of sorrow in his heart. This bright blossom of his had grown up in an atmosphere not its own, and if it must be transplanted into rougher climes, how would it bear the change? What would Pansy be without her little kingdom, where she had queened it so gracefully? A poor man's daughter!

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How could she be that? She had been like the lilies; she toiled not, neither did she spin. The sole purpose of her life had been to give delight to others by her sweetness and beauty. If she should be uprooted, would she not be like those flowers of Paradise, "that never would in other climates grow?"

"Pansy!" he said at last, in a quiet voice. Yet she was startled, and her face grew crimson. As he drew near to her he could see the tears swimming in her blue eyes, and the letter crushed in her unconscious grasp. Justin spoke again in his tenderest manner.

"Is your letter from young Fortescue?" he asked.

"Yes, father," she answered falteringly.

"And you love him, my darling?" he said.

"Oh! I think so," cried Pansy, bursting into a passion of tears, and running into her father's outstretched arms, as she had been used to do in every time of trouble.

But Justin felt that this too must be weighed in the balance before he formed his final resolution.

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CHAPTER XXIII.

ANOTHER DIFFICULTY.

UNDER any circumstances Justin would have gone over to Rillage Grange to see Diana on this first day of his return after so long an absence. He had never entered the faded and sombre little sitting-room belonging specially to her, with a heart so perplexed and burdened. He was longing for a plain path, and his path was intricate and clouded. Even with Diana he could not converse with the frank unreserve which had been the chief charm of their intercourse. Hitherto Diana had been the confidante of all his plans and purposes. But he had come to a knot in the skein of life which could not as yet be shown to her. No human being could see the whole matter, with all its bearings, beside himself. If he should finally resolve upon abiding by his stepfather's later will, and thus setting aside what he knew to be the old man's intentions in his dying hours, he could never tell Diana. There must be always this secret between them. It had been between them in fact all these years, but it had been slumber-

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ing and inoperative, scarcely making itself felt even by him. Now it would have an active, all-pervading existence for him—a reflected influence upon all belonging to him.

Diana had caught sight of him coming over the cliffs, and she had run away to add some trifling decoration to her simple and inexpensive dress. She did it as a sort of homage to him, though he was unaware of it. When Justin came to see her she liked to wear ribbons of the color he was fond of, and she wished to smooth out of sight the few silver lines that were beginning to shine among her dark hair. He had been faithfully told of those gray hairs, and had laughed at them; but all the same Diana did not care to have them show too plainly.

She had been enjoying a more complete rest than had been her lot for years. Her father's illness had been protracted; but Leah Dart had borne the chief stress and strain of it. Leah had proved an efficient and invaluable nurse; and Diana felt very grateful to her. She had not been placed on a footing with the servants, according to the stipulation she had made; and she had gained so much mastery over her patient, that she was able to keep him from plunging into any new excesses. None of the old, disgraceful boon-companions had been admitted into Squire Lynn's presence; and he was submitting to Leah's rule with a singularly good grace. Diana was making up her mind that she must practice some new economy, if

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possible, in order to find the means of retaining Leah permanently in her position as attendant upon her old father.

Justin was almost startled by the change in Diana's appearance when she came to greet him. She was looking younger, and happier, and brighter than she had done for years. The tranquillity congenial to her nature, which had been banished by the dreary isolation of her circumstances, was dawning upon her face. The joy of seeing him again was shining in her dark eyes; and as she came towards him, with frank and hearty gladness, he felt that he could not separate himself from her by a self-imposed exile from Herford.

"So poor Richard is come home at last!" she said, as soon as their first greetings were over. He was holding her hand in his own, but he dropped it hastily as she spoke these words; and Diana knew instantly that Richard's return was looked upon as a misfortune. Her heart sank a little with an inward chill. Was Justin, so excellently good in every other relationship, about to show himself in the light of a hard and stern brother? She looked up wistfully into his face, as she waited for him to speak.

"Yes, Richard has turned up again," he said, with gloomy emphasis. "Diana, I cannot pretend to rejoice. I know you women are all ready to make a hero of him; but I cannot. In my eyes he is the same Dick who ran away; only many years older."

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"But surely," she answered, "surely you are glad to know he is alive and well! Your brother, Justin! It does not seem so long ago since you left no stone unturned to find out whether he was still living, and where he was. Do you forget?"

"That was for a year or two after his father's death," he rejoined; "if he had come back then all would have been well. I could have welcomed him home then; but not after all these years! We were getting on so well without him; and now our black sheep is among us again. What am I to do with him?"

"Do with him!" she repeated; "were we not all lost sheep once? and did not our dear Lord come down to the wilderness, seeking us who had gone astray? It is not difficult to know what to do with a brother, who comes home repentant."

"My dear Diana," he said impatiently, "Dick is no penitent, I assure you. I find it a much harder matter to settle than to talk about. He cannot go on wearing the best robe, and having the fatted calf killed for him every day. The question is, what am I to do with my prodigal, in his father's house? What, for heaven's sake, am I to do?"

He paced up and down the melancholy little room restlessly. The question was not put so much to Diana, as to himself. If she had become his wife ten years ago, he would have laid bare his inmost heart to her, and taken her counsel in this hour

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of bewildering temptation. He knew instinctively what her counsel would be; the counsel of a woman utterly ignorant of the world. How gladly would he have blotted out those ten intervening years, and placed himself back again in his little vicarage, with Pansy only a poor vicar's daughter. He might have done his uttermost to counteract the mischief of his younger brother's influence, and possibly he might have succeeded in restraining him from extreme wildness. At any rate, he would himself have kept his hands clean, and his conscience clear. He would not now be burdened with a secret, which he was ashamed to tell to the woman who loved him best. Diana looked down with sad eyes, not caring to lift them to Justin's cloudy face.

"Here is another difficulty," he said, after a while, seating himself beside her, and opening Sir Robert Fortescue's letter. He read it aloud, in a hard, dry tone. It was plain to her that he did not altogether like it; but she could not guess why. She did not speak, even when he folded it up, and returned it to his pocketbook.

"Diana," he said, in a softened voice of great tenderness, "I wish I could reply by saying that you had consented to be my wife."

"Oh, no, no!" she cried; "Justin, how can I? We decided long ago that I must stand at my post. I believe God has placed me here, and I must be faithful to Him; or how could I be faithful to you?

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But let us set the matter at rest forever. You have been very happy all this time; and why should we not go on as we are, friends always, but knowing that we shall never be more to one another? Do not let me stand in the way of Pansy's happiness. I must not abandon my father, even for your sake. He is my black sheep."

She had no idea of how keen a reproach was conveyed to him by her last words. He had often said to himself that Diana was a saint and a martyr; but he had hardly thought of her as one immeasurably before him in the Christian life. He had felt himself capable of martyrdom. He saw now, as by a sudden flash, what a perfect self-denial her whole life had been. She was, indeed, by her own choice, in the wilderness, upon the rough and stormy mountains, bruised, afflicted, and wounded, patiently seeking to bring back her lost sheep. He was grudging the return of the prodigal son, who had sought home of his own free will. A clamor of voices made a Babel in Justin's conscience; but there was no certain voice.

"I will never give you up," he said curtly, and Diana's face brightened; "but what answer must I give to this letter? Shall I tell Sir Robert that I have the most definite intention of marrying again as soon as I have the chance? He could not ask me to hamper Herford with any large dower for Pansy. I wish to heaven I could say she did not

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care for the young jackanapes! Why do children fall in love so young, Diana?"

"I loved you earlier than that," she answered in a low voice.

"God bless you, my darling!" he rejoined. "Would you really have married me if I had been only the poor vicar of Herford? Would you marry me now if I did not know where to look for my next year's income?"

"If I were free to marry you at all," she said, "I would become the wife of Justin Herford if he had not a shilling in the world."

She said it fervently, her deep eyes looking frankly into his. Justin felt her words to be absolutely true; but would Diana Lynn become his wife if she knew that he was holding an inheritance not indisputably his own? He quitted her side and paced to and fro again across the room.

"Why should you not settle half of your estate upon Pansy," she said at length, "if that would satisfy Sir Robert? Surely you and I could live on the other half. You have no idea of how little I spend; and I have been poor so long I should feel embarrassed if I was ever as rich as you are; besides, I have my own fortune from my mother, three thousand pounds; that brings in more than I spend upon myself. Could you not promise half to Pansy? We could not be happy if she was not, dear child!"

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"God bless you, Diana!" he exclaimed again, once more seating himself beside her, "you are worlds too good for me; but I cannot settle yet. There is Dick come home again; how do you suppose he feels at seeing a stranger in his own place under his father's roof? How can I promise half the estate to Pansy when, perhaps, I ought to give up the whole to Dick?"

"Give up Herford to Richard!" said Diana in amazement; "oh, Justin, I never dreamed of that. Go away forever from Herford and leave him master there? Oh! my dear Justin, do not act rashly; consider it well. It seemed so providential to us all when old Mr. Herford made you his heir. You had been a better son than Richard to him, and no one wondered at it. Be quite sure you are right before you give up the power entrusted to you. Of course you must make ample provision for him, but do not give him more power and influence than you can help. See what my poor father has done for Rillage. I have always looked to Herford as one of the happiest places in our county. I have thanked God often that He has made you master there."

"But what am I to do?" he asked; "must I drive him from his home again?"

"No; that cannot be right," she said, her face showing her perplexity; "oh! Justin, how easy it would have been if you had been left in trust only till he came home. Then we should all have known

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exactly what your duty was. But it was left so absolutely to you, it seems impossible that you ought to give up everything. It is hard for him, poor fellow! How can he ever be happy with the thought of his own father dying and never forgiving him? How hard it will be for him to believe in the love and forgiveness of God!"

"He does not care much about either," said Justin. It seemed to him that it would have been comparatively easy to resign all his own worldly advantages to one who was worthy of them. To Philip Cunliffe, for instance. Or he could have settled the reversion of his estates upon Pansy and young Fortescue; nay, he could have given up the present possession of them and contented himself with a trifle. But to cast his pearls before Richard; his property, his influence, his authority, his reputation! How Richard would trample them under his feet! His brother was come home, giving no sign of repentance, making no promise of amendment. It was true he had had very scanty opportunity of judging; but he could not believe that it was an humble and penitent prodigal who had met him last night with a frowning face and a haughty manner. Justin talked about him to Diana, but with no solution of his difficulty and but little tranquillizing effect upon his disturbed spirit. He left her at last, still undecided how to answer Sir Robert Fortescue, or what he ought to do with his brother's birthright.

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CHAPTER XXIV.

RICHARD SEEKS ADVICE.

AFTER his interview with Leah Dart on the cliffs, Richard took his brother's horse and rode over to Lowborough to see his uncle Watson, carrying with him Leah's little silk bag and its treasured contents. His uncle was on the very point of starting for Herford, to see him and welcome his return. Richard had always been a favorite with him, and he had done his utmost to prevent old Richard Herford making his second will; though when he found all his remonstrances were in vain, it had been drawn up in his office, and executed and attested in his presence. Of late years he had grown increasingly proud of the position taken by Justin in the county, and had learned to rejoice in what he looked upon as the lucky chance that old Herford's will had been made in his favor. When, therefore, Richard told him his story, and fitted in the ragged fragments of yellow paper on his desk, so as to display the few words inscribed upon them, he merely shook his head.

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"My dear lad," he said, "I feel very strongly for you, very strongly indeed; but this is all rubbish; there is positively nothing to shake Justin; nothing even to suspect in the way of foul play. Justin is quite incapable of that. I can testify that he was ready to move heaven and earth to discover you when your father died. Come, come; you are both my nephews, my sister's sons, and if there is one favorite with me, it's you, Dick. But I tell you, you could as easily shake Herford cliffs as Justin. It is hard upon you, of course; but, my boy, why did you run away? and why did you not come back sooner? When one's father is over eighty, there's small chance of his living long, and Justin was always like a son to him. He is a good man, is Justin, and everybody knows you are a scapegrace."

'But what does all this mean?" asked Richard angrily, pointing to the torn papers on the desk.

"Nothing to any purpose," replied the lawyer; "apparently it's only the cover of your father's first will, which was made when you were a baby; see, the date is in the forties, and the last will was in the fifties. If you had the will itself it would be worth no more than waste paper. No, Justin did his best to find you, and no doubt if you had come forward then, he'd have acted handsomely by you. But you chose to stay away ten years longer, and he is Herford of Herford. Even if he was willing to give it up then, he would not do it now; he could not with

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all the claims there are upon him. Look at Pansy, brought up as his heiress. What could he do with her, to say nothing of himself? He'll be member for Lowborough the next time we have an election. There has never been a Herford of Herford in Parliament yet, and he will be the first."

"He's no Herford," growled Richard.

"Now, now," interrupted his uncle, "we have forgotten all that. He has raised the name all through the county; but he is bound to make some provision for you, of course; I will see to you having a nice younger son's portion. Your mother has saved two or three thousand pounds, too, and she must leave all she saves to you. Justin has nearly doubled the value of the property. His oyster-beds bring him in a very good percentage. He has some sloops, and carries on a capital coasting-trade. Justin's head is worth two of mine; he will be a very wealthy man before he dies."

"It's all with my money," cried Richard, striking the desk with his clenched fist till the fragments of paper flew in all directions; "he was a beggarly parson, with no more than two hundred a year, when I went away. It's my money has done it."

"Justin's head and your father's money," said Mr. Watson; "he had a right to do as he chose with it, and he knew you would make ducks and drakes of it."

"The estate ought to have been entailed," answer-

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ed Richard; "but who would have expected any father to be such an unnatural brute as to oust his own son and put another man's son into it? A wicked will like that ought not to stand good by law."

"But the estate was not entailed, and the will stands good," replied his uncle; "you have not a leg to stand upon, my poor Dick. Make yourself as pleasant as you can to Justin, and I'll see what I can do between you."

Richard rode back to Herford in a very different mood from that in which he had galloped to Lowborough. Leah Dart's faithful custody of the scraps of paper had been all in vain. He tossed the faded silk bag away contemptuously into the first ditch he came to, feeling angry with her for having awakened false hopes. Justin was safe in his possession of Herford; and even Richard's sanguine imagination, which was always looking for something to turn up, could no longer cherish the expectation of recovering his forfeited birthright. He must take his uncle's advice, and make himself as pleasant as he could to his elder brother.

This was by no means an easy task. He did not see Justin till they met at the dinner table, and then he was silent and preoccupied. It was quite another thing to make his way with his mother and Pansy. Pansy's sweet face was lit up with radiant smiles; whilst his mother hung upon every word he uttered,

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as if she was delighted with all he said. Jenny Cunliffe, too, was encouraging in her fresh country-bred simplicity. But Justin did not seem to hear Richard's wondrous stories and somewhat silly attempts at wit. Even when they were together after dinner, an interval of a few minutes only, they could hit upon no safe topic of conversation; and Justin soon found an excuse for leaving his brother to enjoy his wine alone.

When Justin entered the drawing-room he found only Mrs. Herford and Jenny. It was still daylight, though the sun was low in the sky, and long gray shadows stretched over cliff and sea. Pansy had stepped out, through the open window, upon the grassy terrace, with its border of summer flowers; among which the evening primroses and tall white lilies were gleaming softly in the tender light. She was flitting to and fro restlessly, as though some unquiet emotion had taken possession of her. Her head was cast down, and her arms drooped at her side. Justin watched her sorrowfully for a minute or two, before going out to join her. This was no longer his playful, light-hearted child! He drew her hand fondly through his arm, and they paced up and down the grassy terrace for a little while, with soundless footsteps and silent lips.

"Father, may I answer his letter?" whispered Pansy at last.

"Whose letter?" he asked; for in the multitude

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of perplexing thoughts crowding upon his mind, he had well nigh forgotten that Pansy had a letter to answer, as well as himself.

"Mr. Robert Fortescue's," she replied, in a demure tone; and then, breaking into a low, tremulous laugh, she went on, "but I'm not to call him Robert, like everybody else. I've given him a new name, that no one will use but me. I call him Richmond; because we saw one another first in Richmond Park. You recollect meeting him, father? Under those beautiful old trees! I never saw trees so beautiful as those."

"And has he given you a new name?" inquired Justin, feeling as if every word of Pansy's stabbed him to the heart.

"No," she answered, "he says he loves the name of Pansy; it is for remembrance, you know. Perhaps he will sometimes call me Heartsease, as Uncle Dick does. May I answer his letter, dear father?"

"How do you like Sir Robert Fortescue?" he asked, evading her question.

"I should not like him much, if he was not his father," said Pansy, "but I know no one ever had such a father as mine! Richmond said so over and over again. He is like a disciple to you; he is ready to follow you anywhere, and do exactly what you wish him to do. He said he had never known any one half so good and clever as you are. That was before I ever thought he loved me; but I could not help loving him for what he said of you."

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"Cunning young rascal!" thought Justin. "When did you know he loved you, Pansy?" he asked.

"Not for certain till this very morning," she replied, dropping her voice again to a happy whisper. "Yesterday when we left London, I made up my mind that I'd been only a silly girl; and when we reached home at night, and I saw how lovely and peaceful it was, I felt as if I should never care to marry anybody, or go away again, but live with you always, like Diana lives with her father. But this morning his letter came, and then I knew. He loves me with all his heart. Oh! I cannot tell how happy I am. But I have not answered his letter; I would not till you gave me leave."

Again for a few minutes they walked along the soft sward of the terrace in silence, so blissful to Pansy that she did not care to break it by speaking again. The sun had dipped behind the rounded brow of the meadow stretching to the summit of the cliff, but the sky was all aglow with the sunset glory of the hidden orb. Over the sea northward, a line of dainty cloudlets were gliding gently along the horizon to lose themselves by-and-by in the splendor of the west. The spray leaping upon the outstretching spurs of the cliffs caught the rays of the sinking sun, and its whiteness was suffused with a tinge of crimson and gold. The windows in the valley began to gleam like so many glow-worms; and the stars were peeping out shyly in the pale

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blue of the eastern heavens. The happy silence was heightened by the twittering of the birds in the hedgerows, and the full, sweet evening song of the thrushes, answering one another from neighboring coppices.

Pansy rubbed her cheek fondly against her father's arm, which she was holding with both of her little hands. He was on the rack, suffering a very agony of sorrow and anxiety for her. It seemed to him it was as if the poor man, who had nothing save one little ewe lamb, that had eaten of his own morsel and drank of his own cup, had been forced to plunge a knife into its white, throbbing throat, as it lay in his bosom. He put off the evil moment as long as he could, till they heard Mrs. Herford calling peevishly through the open window, to say Pansy ought not to be out so late in the night air with the dew falling.

"My darling," he said, very pitifully, while his own heart contracted with a pang greater than hers could be, "if I asked you not to answer this letter till I give you leave, would you obey me? If you had to wait several days?"

"Oh! father, why?" exclaimed Pansy; "he is longing so to hear my answer. He says she shall not be able to sleep an instant till he has my letter. That will be two whole nights to-morrow morning. He will be ill. I almost thought I ought to drive over to Lowborough, and telegraph this afternoon. Why must I not write?"

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"Sir Robert Fortescue has written to me on this subject," he answered, "and it is possible, my little daughter, that after all you could not marry his son. Let us look at it bravely. If you could not marry him, it would be well to be a little reserved towards him. The Fortescues are high people; and they will not receive you into their family as simple Pansy Herford. My dearest, listen to me as if I was your mother. A young, motherless girl like you must be very careful what she says to any man she is not sure of marrying."

Pansy drew herself up to her full height, and raised her head. It was too dark for him to see the crimson flush that coursed over her face and neck; but he knew that he had touched her maidenly pride. She stood silent and erect beside him; her pretty head turned away towards the dim sea. It was clear to him that this love of his young daughter's must be disastrous and unhappy; but to her there was nothing but a little cloud rising in the brightness of her sunny sky. She turned towards him, after a brief pause, and spoke with girlish dignity.

"I am willing to do what you think best, father," she said, "only I wish you to write a few lines to him, and tell him he must wait a little while, and not be unhappy. He thinks so much of you that a letter from you will be almost as good as if I wrote."

Then they went back to the lighted drawing-room, where Richard was lounging on a sofa, very much at

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home, and in recovered spirits. His mother and he kept up a lively conversation for the rest of the evening, for Richard was not one inclined to brood over troubles, or let either the past or the future cast a shadow over the present. He was in comfortable quarters just now, and he would enjoy himself as well as he could, whilst he was in them. "Let us eat and drink, for to-morrow we die," was his maxim.

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CHAPTER XXV.

CHICKENS AGAIN.

IT will readily be believed that Mrs. Cunliffe was taking unbounded interest in the exciting event that had visited Herford, where exciting events were "few and far between." The whole village was agape with curiosity and expectation. Leah Dart had let fall a few mysterious words, hinting at a speedy revolution in affairs; and it was reported furtively that she had the means of driving out Master Justin, and setting up Master Richard in his forfeited birthright. Of course Justin knew nothing of these rumors, nor did they reach Mr. Cunliffe's ears, closed as they were to the echoes of mere worldly gossip. But Mrs. Cunliffe was aware of them from the first, and pondered over them quietly, not breathing a syllable of them to any of those whom they concerned. Her maternal hopes were all aroused. If Richard should turn out the master of Herford, what a chance there would be for Jenny! She was still a welcome visitant at the Court, and she was al-

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ways reckoned a pretty girl when Pansy was away; and Pansy could be no rival in this case. She had seen Jenny hearkening, open-eyed and eager, to Richard's traveller's tales, and Richard was not insensible to her simple enthusiasm.

Mrs. Cunliffe grew intensely anxious to learn the whole truth; and who was more likely to know it than Leah Dart's aunt, Mrs. Fosse? She had not been to see Mrs. Fosse since she had sent for the third couple of her chickens, which had really proved to be very delicate eating for the Vicarage table. There were only three left now, and they were grown to a very fair size. Out of consideration to Mrs. Fosse she had not left them to grow into very advanced chickens, but had sent for a couple now and then, as she needed them. There was inward indignation in Mrs. Fosse's heart; but she had concealed it skillfully, even from her old Jeremy.

"Mrs. Fosse," said Mrs. Cunliffe, in her muffled voice, "the last chicks were delicious, simply delicious. I almost envied you having such fare always at hand. A young, tender chicken, well-fed, with a few rashers of that very prime bacon of your own rearing and curing, and vegetables out of your own garden, grown by your good husband, is a dish fit to be set before a queen."

"When would you take the other three, ma'am?" asked Mrs. Fosse shortly, as if she was not in the most placid of tempers.

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"Well, I am thinking of asking Mr. Richard Herford to condescend to dine at our humble table," she replied, "and they will come in very nicely then. How very kind and good you have been to rear them so very well for me. They have been no anxiety, no trouble at all to me. I should offer to pay you a trifle more than the sum we first agreed upon, only I am sure you will not let me; and I will not grieve you by saying another word about it. It was ninepence, I believe."

"There were a dozen eggs," remarked Mrs. Fosse, unable to keep her tongue quite still.

"Yes; but three were addled," said Mrs. Cunliffe mildly; "there were only nine chickens hatched, I believe. Of course it must be a disappointment to you when your eggs are addled; I quite understand that. I find I have no change with me, but you may feel sure of your money, Mrs. Fosse."

"Never mention it, ma'am," she answered, inwardly praying for patience, and thinking of the firm friendship between her husband and Mr. Cunliffe.

"I shall take care not to forget it," continued Mrs. Cunliffe, "though one may easily forget anything amid all these rapid changes. 'There is a time for everything,' says the book of Ecclesiastes, and it may well make us solemn to think of that. Who would have expected Mr. Richard to come home again, after all these years? You knew old Mr. Herford?"

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"I've dwelt in Herford all my days, and I knew the old master well," said Mrs. Fosse.

"Ah! and was he so wrapt up, as they say, in his son?" she asked, "or was he very fond of Mr. Justin Herford? Justin Webb he was then, his stepson. Were you and Jeremy astonished when the estates came to him?"

"Me and Jeremy went down on our knees to thank God for it," she replied, with more vivacity than usual. "Master Herford was a wrathful man, and a very willful man; and he'd sworn great oaths he'd cut off Master Dick if he didn't come home afore he died. But none of us believed it till the will was read. It seemed almost too good to be true."

"But I hear say Mr. Richard will come into his own yet," suggested Mrs. Cunliffe, with an impartial and curious tone.

"That's Leah's fine talk, set her up for a conceited madam!" answered Mrs. Fosse. "She'll be sayin' Master Dick's goin' to marry her next. No, no. We do have some misgivin's that Master Justin maybe 'll give up to him. You see it is his birthright, and it's cruel and unfair to him, and our Master Justin can't abide anything that's unfair. Somehow it seems like Jacob takin' Esau's birthright from him. But it was a bitter bad day for Herford when Master Dick came back, if he is to be master again, and turn out Master Justin."

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"Ah!" sighed Mrs. Cunliffe, committing herself to nothing.

"If Master Justin gives up the Court," continued Mrs. Fosse maliciously, "I hear folks say as Master Cunliffe 'll give up the Vicarage to him, and we shall lose you and him, ma'am."

"Good gracious, no!" ejaculated Mrs. Cunliffe, as a sudden scathing dread flashed across her mind. She felt, with an ominous heart-sinking, that Philip would do it, if Justin would let him. Philip would think nothing of turning out to beggary and starvation, if these came in the path of self-sacrifice. She had no very high opinion of Justin. But she had not a high opinion of any one; her nature was not capable of real trust. If Justin had gained the estates in any underhand way, as she was quite willing to believe, he would have no scruple in taking back the living he had bestowed upon his friend. She recoiled with dread from the too vivid idea of going back to some poor curacy in a large town, where they would be nobodies, and where she would meet with no little helps to eke out their scanty income. In her terror she murmured, "God forbid!"

"Amen!" said Mrs. Fosse. "God forbid, as Master Justin should give up to Master Dick! But if he do, why nature says as he must go to the Vicarage again. You've only been here these nine years, but he's always lived amongst us, since he was a little curly-headed lad. And there's Miss Pansy,

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she's been born and bred amongst us; she's like our own daughter, seein' as she never had her own mother, poor lamb! She's just the same as own child to every woman in Herford. I couldn't fancy to think of Herford without Master Justin and Miss Pansy. Either squire or parson he must be."

"But, my good woman!" exclaimed Mrs. Cunliffe, "the living was given to Mr. Cunliffe for life. No person could deprive him of it."

"God bless him! He'd be the first to see the rights," said Mrs. Fosse cheerfully, conscious of Mrs. Cunliffe's dismay; "he's a true gentleman and a godly Christian; and he'd never keep another man out of his dues. I'd trust Mr. Cunliffe for that. So I say again, God forbid Master Justin should give up to Master Dick!"

"But isn't Mr. Justin keeping his own brother out of his dues?" asked Mrs. Cunliffe somewhat spitefully.

The old woman's face fell. She did not like to look at the question from that point of view. It was quite evident to her that right and justice would demand the restoration of the church and vicarage to Justin; but she was not prepared to admit that Justin was bound to resign his estates to the born heir. Her dread of Master Dick's reign was too real and too great to allow her to see clearly in that direction. She could only shake her head and repeat, "God forbid it! God forbid it!"

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CHAPTER XXVI.

UNCLE WATSON INTERCEDES.

THE long summer days passed heavily to all at Herford Court. The conflict in Justin's mind did not come to a speedy conclusion, for he was taking time to observe his brother narrowly. There was no evidence of any change having transformed Richard's character. He was simply the sort of man his boyhood had foretold. If he became master of Herford Court he would be the least estimable Herford that had ever owned it. In ten years' time, Justin felt sure, the estate would pass into the hands of strangers, and Richard be begging for his bread. Was it not his duty to hold fast the property?

The idea that his elder brother had robbed him by foul play of his inheritance had not been dismissed from Richard's mind, though he had thrown away as worthless the poor evidence of such a crime. He had never practiced self-control, and now, though it was to his interest to make himself agreeable to Justin, he could not refrain from an occasional outburst of angry insolence, alternating with an almost servile

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deference to him. He made free with the horses and boats belonging to the house; and he lounged about Herford, talking with the fishermen on the beach, with hints and innuendoes of Justin's unlawful usurpation of his birthright. There was a certain sense of justice in the hearts of the men which recognized the claims of the only son to his father's property, and which was kindled into stronger life by Richard's presence. Each one felt that his small possessions—his boat, his cattle, his household furniture—which he had inherited from his forefathers, he held in a sort of trust for the children that were coming after him. His sons were the grandsons of the father who had left him his goods; and there was a natural law which required of him that after he had served his own life with them, they should pass into the possession of those in whose veins the same blood ran. Yet all the while they knew that Justin's ownership of Herford Court was the most beneficial circumstance to every one connected with the estate.

Mrs. Herford, with all the force of a weak-minded woman, took the side of her younger son. She behaved as if she could not make enough of him, and she supplied him with as much money as he chose to demand from her, under the transparent subterfuge of borrowing. Every day the fatted calf was killed, the best robe worn. She invited her friends and neighbors, from far and near, to come and rejoice with her over her long-lost son; and a succession of

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somewhat dreary festivities took place at Herford Court, enjoyed by no one except Jenny Cunliffe. Jenny's mother kept her well supplied with pretty, fresh muslin dresses, and an almost unrestricted supply of ribbons and gloves. The cost was not very great, and Mrs. Cunliffe felt that Jenny was having her chance now. Justin was bound at least to provide handsomely for his brother, who had come home at last safe and sound, though a beggar. Why should not Jenny share Richard Herford's fortunes?

Leah Dart had felt it to be a great blow when Richard told her that her cherished secret had proved utterly worthless. She scarcely believed it, especially as Richard harped upon the notion that there had been foul play somehow. He took his obligations to her very coolly, and did not make her heart beat fast with gladness by kissing her again. In fact, he was really irritated against her for kindling hopes that had been so rudely extinguished by his uncle. He almost felt a grudge against her because the papers had not turned out of more value. When she asked him again for the little silk bag she had carried in her bosom for ten years, he told her how he had tossed it away, utterly indifferent to the chagrin she felt. Leah shed some bitter tears over the loss; she would have given her year's wages for that little bag.

"Justin," said his mother one morning, in a cold and distant manner, "my brother Watson writes me he is coming over to-day. It is high time to see

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what is to be done for Dick. It's very hard for him, poor boy! cruelly hard to see you here in his place. You should recollect you were not born a Herford. Of course, if my poor, dead husband had taken my advice, I should have shown him how very unjust it was to cut off his own son, and quite against my wishes. Right is right. But Mr. Herford always kept me in the dark, and my poor boy suffers for it."

"I have not yet finally decided what I shall do," answered Justin; "it is a more difficult question than you suppose. You would have me deliver up everything into Richard's hands?"

"I hardly say that," replied the mother musingly. "Richard is rather a spendthrift. Still, I cannot help feeling he is the rightful owner. He goes ordering about more like the owner than you do. He thrashed one of the lads this morning right soundly; and that you would never do. Anybody could see with half an eye which is the born master."

"The born tyrant," interposed Justin, with mingled indignation and sadness.

"Just like his poor father," continued Mrs. Herford. "Oh! there's no question as to which is the true Herford of Herford. No; poor, poor Dick! he is not in his right place. He was so very young when he ran away. He tells me he was actually on his way home, was close at hand, when he heard his father was dead, and how he had left you everything, and

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he went off again, broken-hearted. If he had been a fortnight earlier he would have found his father alive, and it would all have been altered. It was one of his shipwrecks that hindered him from being home in time. He has been in a great number of shipwrecks."

"Then you wish to see Richard master here?" said Justin.

"Well, I only wish what is right," she answered; "I cannot believe it is right for my poor boy to be a beggar in his own father's house. You would not like Pansy to be turned out in that way for a woman that was not a bit related to you. Blood is blood, and blood is thicker than water. Right is right, and wrong can never be right."

After having delivered herself thus oracularly, Mrs. Herford leaned back in her chair and adjusted her lace lappets with an air of infinite self-complacency. As usual when he was in perplexity, Justin was marching up and down the room; but though she hated to see it, she dared not give way to her petulance. She was always a little awed by her elder son; but Dick never gave her the same insufferable feeling of being looked through and silently condemned. She felt sure that Justin had found her out, and knew her thoroughly, though his manner towards her was unvaryingly kind and considerate. Dick would think more of her opinion than he did.

But Justin was not disregarding his mother's opinion now. On the contrary, he was pondering

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over every word she had uttered. Especially he dwelt upon his brother's statement that he was on his way home when his aged father died. As a man watching the outbreak of a threatening tempest takes heed how a straw is blown, he was carefully considering the least thing that had a bearing on the momentous question on hand. He dared not say to himself—he was absolutely incapable of saying it—"I will hold what I have, in spite of conscience, of uprightness, of responsibility to a higher rule than the mere legal processes of a court of law." Yet it was difficult to make sure of that higher rule, whilst there were so many conflicting claims to adjust. As yet he resembled the man partially restored to sight, who saw men as trees walking. His thoughts and plans and desires were all vague, dim, and wandering. He could not open his eyes and see the path of righteousness stretching before him in a clear light. His mother's words took the same obscure form, and began to haunt his troubled brain.

It was a relief to hold a conversation on the subject with his uncle, though he could do nothing towards really helping him to a decision, whilst the fundamental fact was concealed from him. Mr. Watson lost no time in beating about the bush. Both of them were his nephews, and if he liked Richard best, he admired Justin most. Justin was a rising man, coming into importance in the county, and incomparably the best master there had ever been at Herford. Richard

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was not fit in his uncle's eyes to be trusted with either money or influence; yet there was just reason why he should be handsomely provided for by Justin.

"I hope you are ready to do something handsome for the poor fellow," he said to Justin.

"What should you call handsome?" he asked.

Mr. Watson paused. He had sounded Mrs. Herford as to her intentions, and found her obstinately resolved to hold fast her own money. She had been saving the greater portion of her income since her husband's death, and had invested it at a high percentage in Justin's improvements. The £300 per annum bequeathed by Mr. Herford's later will had grown into £500. But she was quite determined not to lose any of it. Mr. Watson had boldly promised to secure £300 a year for Richard; but if his mother would not do anything, it must all come out of Justin's pocket. At the very time, too, when Pansy was likely to be a much greater expense to her father. He did not know of Sir Robert Fortescue's letter, or he would have felt the difficulty still greater.

"We must take into consideration the poor fellow's extraordinary position," he said; "all the country is talking about it. There is no doubt he has a natural right to everything; and in many lands he would have the legal right. English law, however, steps in, and says every man may do as he likes with his own, with certain restrictions. He may indeed limit his successor to a life interest only in his estate, and en-

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tail it upon others. Dick's ancestors might have done this; and his father could not have disinherited him. But they each left their successor free; and you have reaped the benefit. Still the natural right remains the same. What my father and forefathers gained ought to be mine, not another man's. I considered old Herford's will unjust, and I did my utmost to get him to alter it. You must take all these circumstances into calm and fair consideration, Justin."

"Do you think me covetous?" asked Justin, with a half smile.

"No," answered his uncle, in a dubious tone, "but you know the value of money. You only reckon twenty shillings to the pound, while poor Dick counts five-and-twenty. Covetous? Why, no! Not miserly nor greedy. About as covetous, I suppose, as other men, who have a good snug income in their hands, and are making a good use of it. You were always afraid of being poor, when you were quite a little lad."

"Was I?" he asked sorrowfully.

"Well! You have the eyes of all the country upon you," said Mr. Watson, "there's nothing else talked about at Lowborough. I am satisfied you will deal liberally with your brother, whether you love him or not. I always feel sorry for that elder brother in the parable, you know, who stayed at home, and was good to his father; and when young

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scapegrace turned up again, and all the house went mad over him, I don't wonder he was angry. It was all right for the father to be glad; but brothers are different. I hope he made the best of it, however; and you will do the same, Justin."

"As soon as I know what is best," answered Justin.

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CHAPTER XXVII.

AT THE LIGHTHOUSE.

THOUGH the atmosphere of Herford was charged with electricity, and every one else was conscious of it, Mr. Cunliffe continued to breathe the calm air of devout abstraction. It had been settled that he should take a brief holiday after Justin's return from London, and he left home early the next week, surprised and disappointed at his wife's steady refusal to accompany him. Mrs. Cunliffe could not think of quitting Herford whilst a storm was hanging over it which might sweep away her own welfare in its swift career.

From the time that Justin had given up the living, it had been his practice to take his friend's duty in his absence. As soon as the office ceased to be compulsory it became a pleasure to him. He had a sense of solemn enjoyment in standing up among his own people, and leading their prayers, like the princes of old, who were also the priests of their subjects. The villagers, on their part, liked to look up occasionally to Master Justin in the pulpit; though

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on the whole they were inclined to be more critical of his sermons than of their vicar's. "Master Cunliffe's head has got only one thing inside it," they were wont to say, "but Master Justin's got fifty. We cannot look for as much from him." Justin knew quite well their estimate of his ministrations; but he knew also they enjoyed them as much as he did. He could not be jealous of his friend's superiority on his own ground.

There was a great concourse of curious people the Sunday of Mr. Cunliffe's absence. What brought some of them there, they could not tell themselves. Mr. Watson had driven over from Lowborough. Leah Dart had walked along the cliffs from Rillage; and still more strange, Diana Lynn had come, and was seated beside Pansy in the Court pew. The crowded congregation, filling every nook of the little church, struck Justin with an unusual sense of awe. There was scarcely a strange face among them; but he felt as if it would have been an easy task to face strangers in the stead of these neighbors and dependents, looking up at him with their keen and eager gaze. Their thoughts had been occupied on the same topic as his own. They had been trying him, and sitting in judgment upon him; though as yet their verdict was in suspense. It required a great effort to steady his voice and read the old familiar words.

An ever-growing gloom and heaviness of spirit oppressed him. He feared that it must make itself

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heard in the tones of his voice, and visible in the expression of his face. He struggled to get the mastery over himself, and he partly succeeded. But who was he, that he should seem thus to stand between God and man? Why should his voice, rather than any other, be lifted up in the solemn accents of prayer? All the week he had been in conflict on the battle-field of the world; walking by the world's light, and reasoning by the world's wisdom. There was many a man there better fitted to lift up his unfettered hands in quiet trust to God.

Then there rushed through his mind the recollection that he had once filled this place, and quitted it, to go up, as he thought, to a higher. He had ceased to be the vicar of Herford in order to become its master. The broad acres, with their promising outlets into worldly prosperity, had seemed better to him, more worthy of his powers, than the charge of these poor peasant souls. It was true he had given to them a better pastor than he had been himself. Yet all the same, his own choice had been the owning of lands, and the possession of influence and reputation, and the good things of this life. He had deluded himself with the fancy that he was serving God. He had in fact been serving Mammon.

How he got through the service, and the sermon that followed it, he could not tell. All the faces below him blended into a confused mass, as he repeated mechanically the words that his eye fell upon. He

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felt glad, when it was over, to take refuge in the vestry and sit there in a blank stupor. The old sexton came in, when the congregation had dispersed, but he bade him go, and leave the key in the church door. Pansy tapped at the window, and his eyes were lifted to her sweet face, looking in upon him through the dim panes; but he only shook his head at her invitation to walk up the cliff with her and Diana. How quickly would he cut the knot he could not untie, but for Diana and Pansy! How joyfully would he go back to his old despised post of vicar of Herford, could he but blot out these last few years!

The bells did not ring for afternoon service; and the news ran from lip to lip that Master Justin was not well enough to do the vicar's duty again. Such a circumstance had never occurred before, and it seemed as astonishing and portentous as an eclipse of the sun. Moreover he was remaining alone in the vestry, with the door locked inside. Mr. Cunliffe was known to indulge in long spells of meditation and prayer inside the church, with the key turned to prevent intrusion. But Master Justin was altogether a different personage. There must be something amiss.

A large number of strangers had come again for the afternoon prayers; and there was a good deal of visiting of neighbors in consequence. The early tea-tables of the village were crowded. There was much guessing going on, and a fine thrill almost of terror.

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Could it be true, as Leah Dart had said, that Master Dick was going to law to turn out his elder brother? And did Master Justin feel somehow that he was in the wrong? Why could not they share and share alike? If they went to law they would lose all their money, no doubt; and what would become of Herford then? It was quite clear, in any case, that something must be going to happen.

The day was still warm and bright at seven o'clock, the hour for old Fosse's meeting. There were more people than usual wending their way along the rocky pathway on the Lantern-hill, for they eagerly needed a centre for meeting, and old Fosse was sure of having some very clear opinions of his own. Leah Dart had been spending the day with her mother, who made her appearance with her, feeling that once a year it was incumbent upon her to pay her duty to the Almighty, by listening to a few good words; and she preferred old Fosse's good words to Mr. Cunliffe's more regular and more cultivated ministrations. Mrs. Fosse locked up her straying poultry, and went with her husband to the lighthouse. The ancient chapel was as full as it had ever been, in the days when the most popular preaching friar had called his congregation together by the tinkling of the bell in the low, square belfry. Jeremy took up his post on the threshold, as being the most convenient spot from which to address his hearers, and from which he commanded a view of the rocky pathway leading up to the lighthouse.

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It was a little after seven in the evening when Justin left the church, and was seen by many inquisitive eyes to saunter down to the beach slowly and languidly. He turned mechanically to the path up the Lantern-hill. It had been a favorite haunt of his since his early boyhood. The little tongue of rock stretching out into the water was ordinarily quiet and deserted, and from the far end all view of the village was cut off, and there was nothing to be seen except cliff and sea. Justin had forgotten it was Sunday evening. He was so absorbed in the conflict still raging within him that he could not give a thought either to the time or place. He was going on, like a man deaf and blind, who is led by some friendly hand which has grown so familiar that he hardly feels its clasp. It was here he had come the night old Herford died, and he was coming again, half-unconsciously, to knit up the ravelled memories of the past. But as he came below the lighthouse he was startled out of his revery by the sound of voices.

Old Fosse's sunburnt face and silvery head stood out clearly against the gray and weather-stained stones of the ancient porch. There was an expression of placid happiness upon his face. He saw Justin at the foot of the steep rocky staircase, and he beckoned to him to come up with a gesture of welcome, though he did not pause in giving out the hymn that was about to be sung by the congregation within. Justin could distinguish a crowd of men and

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women in comparative darkness within the lighthouse, swaying to and fro with the energy in which they put their whole strength of voice into the singing. It was the custom still in that remote country place for two lines, or half a verse, to be read out aloud by the preacher and sung by the people, producing a quaint alternation of full-toned singing and quiet speech. Fosse was reading in rapturous tones as Justin mounted the steps:

> "No foot of land do I possess;
> No dwelling in the wilderness;
> A poor, wayfaring man!"

Whilst these lines were being sung, with many an old-fashioned quaver, he offered half his book to Justin, as he had often done when the master of Herford had been a boy, before he had gone to college and taken orders. The memory of those days brought a smile to his worn face, as he took his place beside old Fosse. The heart of the old fisherman glowed with delight. Master Justin was as dear to him as his own son could have been, and he felt no embarrassment at the idea of preaching before him. When Fosse was preaching, no thought of himself could intrude. He spoke to his little congregation as he would have talked to each man singly, if he had been sitting beside him on the rude bench under the lighthouse wall. Now as Justin sat just within the porch, old Fosse stood on the threshold, and with his white head thrown back

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and his every feature bright with inward gladness, he prepared to address his uneducated audience.

There had been a slight stir and commotion amongst the people at sight of Justin, but it quickly subsided into decorous tranquillity, and the pleasant, cheery tones of old Fosse alone broke the silence.

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CHAPTER XXVIII.

OLD FOSSE'S SERMON.

"'AND when Jesus saw that, He was very sorrowful, and said, How hardly shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God! For it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God!'

"Jesus was very sorrowful when he saw that! What do you s'pose he saw? The poor widow that had only a mite, all the livin' she had, and she put that into the treasury box? Or the blind beggars, poor men! sittin' by the roadside beggin'? Or that sick woman, which had suffered many things of many physicians, and spent all she had, and was nothin' bettered, but rather grew worse? Or did he look into that bag Judas took care of, which was so often empty? Or was he thinkin' of his own disciples, that had neither silver nor brass in their purses? P'raps, if we'd been set to guess, we should have guessed any o' these. Or we might have guessed He was thinkin' how lonesome He was, and how far from His Father and his Father house. Jesus was very

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sorrowful, but it was for none of these things. He had just seen a rich man!

"Ah! the dear Lord was thinkin' about rich men. A minute before He felt so sorrowful, one o' them had come to Him, very eager to learn how to win eternal life. He was a young man, a ruler, with plenty of power, and I dare say he ruled over his folks quite well and justly; better than most men, p'raps. There's not a word said against him by anybody. We know he wasn't too much set up by bein' a ruler; for he comes runnin' to Jesus, and kneelin' down to Him in the way; ay! kneelin' in the sight of all th' crowd, and on the dusty road, just like the poor leper that once came to Jesus, beseechin' Him, and kneelin' down to Him, and sayin' unto him, 'If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.' No, no; he didn't give himself airs, though he was a ruler, and a rich man. He knew Jesus could tell him how to win eternal life; and he was not too grand to kneel down for such a blessin' as that.

"Ay! and Jesus beholdin' him, loved him. Loved him; think of that! Jesus loves us, every one, thank God! but maybe there was somethin' very special about this young man, that made him very pleasant in the Lord's eyes. We all know what it is to see some kind, sweet face, like our Miss Pansy's, God bless her; and we love it all in a moment, without stoppin' to think why. We know Jesus loved His disciple John, and chose him to sit beside Him at

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supper, and let him rest his head upon His bosom. And he loved this young ruler. Poor rich young man! He might have had the Lord Jesus Christ for bosom friend; he might have lived with Him, hearkenin' every day to His blessed words, and lookin' upon his blessed face, and feelin' the clasp of His hand. But he missed it all; poor fellow! poor fellow!

"'What lack I yet?' he asked. He felt he wanted somethin', though he was so rich he had everythin'—save eternal life. That was what he lacked—eternal life. An awful thing to miss that is, either in this world or the world to come. What is eternal life? Why! the Bible tells us plain. 'This is eternal life, to know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom Thou hast sent.' The poor young man had kept all the commandments, but he did not know God yet, nor Jesus, who had come to make God known. But he felt he was lackin' somethin'. 'Come, know me!' said Jesus. 'Take up thy cross, and follow me, for that is the only way to eternal life. You shall live with me, like these poor men, my disciples; and I will teach you about my Father, till you know Him and me. You can only know the Father through me!' What! was there no other way for him to win eternal life? Must he give up his rulership and his possessions?—great possessions they were. Could he have no treasure except treasure in heaven? Then the rich man went away grieved and very sorrowful.

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"I don't wonder at the Lord bein' very sorrowful too. Poor folks came, and could get all they wanted from Him. Sick folks were healed, and blind folks received their sight. Sad folks were comforted. Even lepers and folks possessed with devils were set free. But when rich folks came the Lord could do nothin' for them. They had got all they wanted, except eternal life. Except eternal life, mark you! and they were too rich to win that, in the only way it can be won. He may well be very sorrowful when He looks at rich men.

"'It's easier,' said Jesus very sorrowfully, 'for a camel to go through a needle's eye, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.' 'Well! that's impossible!' say the disciples; and they were astonished out of measure. They were never so astonished as at that; they were exceedingly amazed. Even when Jesus told them beforehand of the manner of His death, they were not so amazed and astonished out o' measure. 'Who can be saved if a rich man cannot?' they asked; 'a rich man has everythin' his own way. He's a ruler, and everybody gives way to him. He's plenty of time; there's nothin' to hinder him from keepin' the commandments from his youth up. He can give loads o' money away, and nobody blames him. Who then can be saved?' Ah! they never thought the kingdom o' heaven is as men runnin' a race; and who can run well that is laden with thick clay? If a man is passin' over clayey ground,

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and he clogs his own feet with it, how is he to win a race? He was a young man, and nimble enough to run along the high-road to meet with Jesus; but his soul was heavy laden with the pleasures and the cares o' riches, and could not run up the shinin' road to God.

"Through a needle's eye! Isn't that much the same as enterin' in at the strait gate? The gate's just wide enough to let our souls in, but it can't be stretched to let in one rag of our possessions. If we poor folk love our bits of cottages, or our gardens, or our boats, so as to make us forget God, why, we are trying to drive our camel through the needle's eye; and it can't be done. We're what the world calls poor, almost all of us, but we can make Jesus very sorrowful. If we were out in a great storm, with darkness comin' on, and rocks, strange rocks ahead, and us driftin' on them, and we saw a quiet haven close by, only with a channel so narrow, and so low an archway to go under that we must lower our masts and see that our tacklin' was all taut and tight, would we go on to the rocks and be lost rather than run into that safe harbor? Nay, wouldn't we quit nets, and boats, and all, and escape with our bare lives? You would, you would. Well, then, for your soul's sake, get rid of all that keeps you back from God; enter in at the strait gate; go through the needle's eye. Peter said, 'We have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?' Ah! Peter, are you

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goin' to make a bargain with the Lord? But the Lord was not grieved with him. The disciples had done their part first; they had done what the rich man could not do. They had forsaken all they had, and followed him. They had gone through the needle's eye. And what did Jesus promise them? Everlasting life! The only thing the poor rich young man lacked. Well done, disciples! good and faithful servants! ye shall lack nothin'; enter ye into the joy of our Lord.

"The kingdom of God! There are no rich folks or poor folks there; no great men or small men. 'The rich and the poor meet together; the Lord is the maker of them all.' He makes men rich or poor as He sees fit, knowin' what is best for every one of us. 'We brought nothin' into this world,' says Paul to Timothy, 'and it is certain we can carry nothin' out.' 'The love of money is the root of all evil,' he says again, 'which while some have coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows.' Jesus might well be very sorrowful over the rich young man. He went away to pierce himself through with many sorrows. PIERCE HIMSELF THROUGH WITH MANY SORROWS!

"But I was wishful to say a word or two about the kingdom of God. Paul was caught up into the third heaven, and heard unspeakable things, which it is not lawful for man to utter. That is the grand palace and throne of the kingdom; but the kingdom of God

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is here in this life. Paul says, and he knew better than most men, that it's righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost. It's mostly an unspeakable thing, but I'll tell you all I can about it. There's righteousness. You and me, we can live in this world in a way to please the righteous God. I know I've my faults and failin's; all of us have; but there's many a thing I do that I can look up to God about, and know He is pleased with it. 'I do always those things that please Him,' says Jesus. Ah, Lord! Thou wert His only begotten Son, in whom He is ever well pleased. But we do not always do things that please Him; only sometimes, when we are most like little children playin' at work, and thinkin' they are pushin' father's boat down into the sea with their little hands, whilst he's pullin' with might and main, and smiles at them for helpin' him. God smiles down upon us when we think we're helpin' Him.

"Then after righteousness comes peace; the peace that Jesus left to His disciples. He was goin' into glory; and He left His peace with us, a peace passin' all understanding. I'll try to tell you what it is like, though it is unspeakable. Sometimes I've been far away from land on the open sea, and there's been nought but blue sky above me, and the blue water all around me. The sky seemed like the sea, and the sea shone like the sky; all calm, quietness, peace. No land there, with its work and worry. And I've let myself float on it, like a babe lyin' on its mother's

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lap, looking up to the blue smilin' sky above me. That's how my soul is with God. I am restin' upon Him in a great calm and peace. There's nought but God above, and beneath, and all about my soul. When it lifts up its eyes and looks around there's nought but God to be seen; there's no fears, no cares, no steerin' or rowin' for itself. Above it there is only the smilin' face of God. This is peace; what joy unspeakable and full of glory is I don't know yet, but my joy shall be full, and no man shall take it away from me. This is the kingdom of God.

"Rich men that love their riches and poor men that hate their poverty cannot enter in, except through the needle's eye. Which of you will pass through this needle's eye?"

Old Fosse had been standing with his face turned towards the dusky group of listeners, sitting silently in the dimly-lighted interior, while Justin had remained in the corner of the porch, from which he could see the sunlit cliffs. As the old man's voice, growing tremulous as it came near the close, altogether ceased, he moved quietly away, and taking an unfrequented track, was soon beyond the sound of the singing, which rose and fell at measured intervals. It was a lovely summer evening, and Justin sought a quiet, solitary spot on the cliffs, where no eye could see him, and no foot pass by.

He wished to be alone. All day his soul had been dwelling in darkness; and a new light was dawning

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upon it, solemn and mysterious as the daybreak after a tempestuous night. In his dread of poverty and his desire to be rich, he had fallen into his temptation and the snare spread for him, and had erred from the faith. He had shut himself out of the kingdom of God.

Then there came to him one of those strange and mysterious crises in the history of the soul, which none know save those who are called to pass through them. A deep awe overwhelmed him, and he hid his face even from the dying light of the day. The earthy husk of life was stripped off and shrivelled up in the presence of the mighty influence that swept over him. His soul was wrestling for a greater blessing than he had ever dreamed of before. Not a word came to his lips, or was fashioned in his brain. He was not conscious of the flight of the solemn hours. The quiet sounds of night did not penetrate his ear, and the soft summer breeze touched his head without arousing him. So motionless was he, he might have been dead.

But when he raised his head and lifted up his pallid, awe-stricken face, there was no more irresolution in his heart. Herford lay below him in the dusk of the summer's night, with its sleeping cottages and strip of silver-sand, where the white fringed waves were rippling quietly. Above it stood his home, with one light burning still in Pansy's window. The church stood out clearly on its little slope of rising

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ground. All this was his own no longer. He must go out into the world recognized no more as the prosperous land-owner and popular magistrate. There would be conflicting and false rumors about him, and for a few days he would be the wonder and talk of the county. Then he would be forgotten, and Richard would be Herford of Herford.

He had suffered the bitterest pang for his daughter's sake. As yet indeed he did not know what the conflict had cost him, but it was over. There was a great calm in his inmost soul, as of one whose feet feel the steadfast rock beneath them after long buffeting with mighty waves of the sea. He knew that he had only one master, and that the yoke of all other servitudes was broken from off his neck. The love of the world had been cast into the consuming fire of the love of God, and had been destroyed forever. He had entered into the kingdom of God.

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CHAPTER XXIX.

RESTITUTION.

IT was more than ten years since Justin had turned aside into that way which had seemed good in his eyes, but he had held the estates against the silent protest of his conscience no longer than eight days. He had been fully persuaded, possibly because he wished it, that his stepbrother was dead, and that Herford was fairly and justly his own. Even during these eight days the conflict had been more on behalf of his daughter than for himself. But now he was resolved to face the reality, to be true. What he could do to shield Pansy from suffering he would do; for himself he was almost ready to welcome it.

But the path was no easy one to pursue, though the inward barriers were cast down. It was a solemn night for Justin, as he deliberated over his immediate action. Richard must be reinstated in the house of his ancestors, whilst he must turn out into the world, with a shadow attending him which would cling to his name and dim the fair reputation he had won. He was utterly stripped of all, even of his

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name, for he would no longer be Herford of Herford. Now that the question was settled, he could see his position with great clearness; he must become an almost penniless man, with a suspicion dogging him like his shadow. For how would the world understand what he had done? What would those nearest to him think of it? How would Diana, how would Pansy bear it?

He came down late in the morning and inquired for Richard, who was gone into the village, the servant told him. Richard had not been present in the church the day before, in spite of Pansy's entreaties that he would go with her to hear her father preach. The irritation of the continual sight of his elder brother occupying the position that was his by birthright, was working within his shallow nature as much deep hatred as he was capable of feeling. He had met with Diana as she came out of church, and walked with her over the cliffs to Rillage Grange, where he stayed the rest of the day, and late on into the night. Leah Dart had found him there on her return from her uncle Fosse's preaching, and as soon as Miss Di left her father and his guest she relaxed her stringent rule, and indulged her patient and Master Dick with something very nearly approaching the carousals so strictly forbidden by Dr. Vye. Squire Lynn's glass she watched over herself, but Richard was at liberty to drink as much as he pleased.

The consequence of this was that Richard was

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feeling dull and in low spirits this morning. Whenever his spirits sank there was a lurking imp of self-reproach ready to lift up its head, and torment him with vexing thoughts of his old father dying, without recalling the curses he had invoked upon him. At these seasons Richard felt himself accursed. He was superstitious; the old stories told him in his earliest years, by the credulous and ignorant fishermen of a former generation, had struck deep roots in his ill-informed and untrained mind. He had a fixed, unshaken faith in the power of a curse, and of the sheer impossibility of escaping from its malign influence. His father's malediction hung over him like an eternal threat, never to be repealed. This morning he had awoke from a hateful dream, in which he had seen vividly his father's withered face, and heard his broken voice muttering curses against him.

He was making up his mind that he must quit Herford, where every spot recalled his father, and seek some stirring scene where he might stifle such memories. He strayed absently through the churchyard, and into the church, the door of which was open. The walls of the old chancel were covered with marble tablets to the memory of past Herfords of Herford and Lynns of Rillage. His father's monumental stone was there, containing simply his name and the dates of his birth and death. There was no epitaph, no panegyric on his virtues.—"Aged 83." Those were the last characters. All the other Herfords had rec-

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ords of their having been good fathers, good husbands, and good friends. But no praise had been accorded to this last old man. He had lived and died—that was all. Richard stood gazing at it with maudlin tears in his eyes.

"Father," he muttered, "if you'd forgiven me, I'd have given you a better stone than that."

He turned round hastily, hearing a footstep in the aisle. It was Justin coming up to him. There had been no interview yet between the brothers without a feeling of chilly reserve, and almost a sense of animosity between them. But at this moment Richard was soft-hearted. His thoughts had been dwelling on the past, and he could remember how proud he used to be of his big brother, when he was yet a young boy, not old enough to rush into sin. How good Justin had been to him when he came home for his holidays! He had indulged him with all the sympathetic kindness a big boy sometimes shows towards a little one. Richard could recollect riding aloft on his shoulders over the fields, and swimming out with him towards the white-crested waves which tossed and played with him safely while his brother's arm was about him. He could not forget how earnestly Justin had striven to turn him aside from his mad career of folly and disobedience, nor how he had pleaded with him never to carry out his threat of running away from home. The hardship of seeing Justin made the head of the family consisted in the fact

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that he was not really his own elder brother and heir to the estate. It would have been no grievance if Justin had been born a Herford.

These thoughts hurried through Richard's mind as Justin came deliberately up the aisle, and he held out his hand in silence and grasped Justin's hand warmly. Justin was startled and touched to the quick. There had been no sign of sensibility or of penitence before in the returned prodigal, yet here he was standing before his father's monument with tears in his eyes. The old love for his younger brother, so soon smothered by the fatal indulgence that had ruined him, sprang afresh into Justin's heart. He clasped Dick's hand with a hearty pressure.

"Justin," he said, after a long pause, and speaking in broken accents, "it's an awful thing to have your own father's curse hanging over you! It can never be unsaid now, you know, and it's always working against me. How can a fellow repent and grow better, when his father's curse is on him? I'm like Cain; I'm doomed to be a vagabond on the earth as long as I live."

Justin was grasping his hand still, and looking into his face with a grave and steady regard. He could love his prodigal brother now, and feel a keen and deep desire for his welfare. But Dick's words stung him. Was it true that he had been binding his brother's soul to sin during all these years?

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"Would you have repented if your father had forgiven you?" he asked.

"How can I tell?" replied Richard almost petulantly. "He died cursing me; he cut me off, his only son."

"He forgave you before he died," answered Justin; "he forgave you fully, and he restored your birthright to you, as he thought. He gave our mother the will which disinherited you, as he believed, and bade her burn it."

"By George!" exclaimed Richard, turning very pale.

"It was almost the last thing he said in his life," continued Justin, "at the last hour. Till then he held fast by his resentment, and nobody knew he had forgiven you but me. But at the last he intended to make you amends. There is no curse upon you. Dick, my poor fellow, if that has kept you back from repentance and a better life, I shall rejoice forever in what I am about to do this day."

"My old father forgave me!" he muttered.

"Fully," answered Justin; "he intended to destroy his last will, which disinherited you. He always meant to destroy it the day you came home again, and he had it burned, as he thought, and as I thought, too, on his death-bed. But he had made a mistake; he had put the wrong will into the wrong cover. He gave my mother the will he wished kept, and kept the one he wished destroyed—the one that made me his heir. It was a fatal mistake for me."

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"More fatal for me," said Richard, with a faint sneer. The suspicions that had been awakened by Leah Dart came back upon his mind with fresh force. A sudden low suspicion was manifest in his tone and manner, which made Justin wince.

"It was a mistake full of harm for us both," he said. "It would have been best for me to have made the truth known at once; but several considerations weighed strongly with me. I made every possible inquiry after you; I advertised in every colonial paper, and in the chief American papers, begging of you to return."

"Ah! I saw some," interrupted Richard; "but I'd heard the old man had cut me off with a shilling, and I did not choose to come home to eat humble pie from a half-brother that had no right to the property or the name. By George! it's a queer story; it'll take a good deal of looking into, this will."

"If you had come home," said Justin quietly, "as soon as you saw my advertisement, I should have reinstated you. I took neither name nor property till I felt almost satisfied you were dead. You have been at home eight or nine days, and I am ready to relinquish all to you."

"Make me master of Herford!" exclaimed Richard, in intense surprise.

"I have already sent for Uncle Watson," he continued, "to advise us. He will satisfy you that I am acting in perfect fairness. There may be some little

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delay, but from this time you are the sole owner of the estates in my eyes. Richard, let this be the turning-point in your life. You are not a foolish, headstrong lad now; listen to reason. You will step at once into a good position, with a fair income, larger than any of your forefathers had, and sufficient for the life of a country gentleman, who looks after his own lands and manages his own affairs. You will have considerable power and influence, for which you must one day give account to God. If you have been troubled by the thought of your father's anger and curse, how much more you should be afraid of God's! I implore you, make this the point at which you will turn away from your follies and sins, and seek God's forgiveness. You would have sought your father's forgiveness if you had come home before he had died. Remember you have sinned against God as well as against him."

"I have, Justin, I have!" sobbed Richard, overcome for the moment, but for the moment only, by conflicting feelings. It was characteristic of him that he gave no thought to Justin and the change in his circumstances. The old lurking terror of his father's curse was gone forever. He had been forgiven and reinstated by the poor old man, whom he had deserted, and whom he could now afford to forget. He was no longer the penniless, dependent brother, liable to be cut adrift at any time, and sent back into the cold, inhospitable world. He was the real mas-

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ter and owner of Herford, and Justin the supplanter was giving up the birthright to him. It was his own place; who else could have any claim to it? He must get to know all the ins and outs of this extraordinary story. Why had he been left wandering about, in poverty and loneliness, while there was a good estate waiting for him? He should like to have a clear understanding about it.

"Not here," said Justin, when he gave utterance to this wish. "Your uncle Watson managed all your father's affairs, and as soon as he comes I will go through it all. I wish to hide nothing, nor to keep anything back. I will deliver my own soul, and I pray God yours may be delivered also."

"I wonder how long he will be?" rejoined Richard impatiently. "You're a parson, Justin, and bound to talk good, you know; but I can't think of anything else, till I know all. I'm glad enough to know the old man forgave me," he added in a lower voice.

"He forgave you fully," Justin reiterated with the greater emphasis, as he saw that his father's pardon had taken hold on his shallow nature.

"And I'll promise to forgive you fully," said Richard, once more holding out his hand to his brother; "yes, I'll forgive you beforehand, though I don't clearly understand it all. You need not be afraid of me, Justin."

He spoke in a tone of superiority, such as Justin

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had heard often in the later years of his brother's boyhood, when they had half angered and half amused him. He could not feel either anger or amusement at this moment. With a foreboding heart he looked earnestly into his handsome face, with its voluptuous, vacillating expression. Was he called upon to relinquish all the goodly work of his life into grasping, selfish hands like these, and trust all his generous schemes to a self-indulgent, worthless nature like this? But Justin could no longer do evil that good might come. He had entered into the kingdom of realities, where perfect integrity was essential, at whatever sacrifice. He must go straight onwards, and trust all results to God.

"I'll go and meet Uncle Watson," said Richard.

For a short time Justin remained alone in the church, pacing up and down the sunlit aisle. He almost marvelled at himself that he could have run into such a snare, as to give up his lowly station for the possession of his stepfather's lands. What would he not have given to be merely the vicar of Herford once again, with no aspirations after a wider sphere!

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CHAPTER XXX.

A FULL CONFESSION.

RICHARD HERFORD hurried away to the stables, his own stables now, and ordered the groom to saddle Justin's horse for him. The man demurred, and said his master might want to ride himself; whereupon Richard struck him sharply across the shoulders, quite after the manner of old times. He felt himself the master again.

He did not spare the horse as he galloped along the highway to Lowborough, for he was impatient too see his uncle, and pour out the whole story, as far as he knew it, to him. He overshot his mark in his eagerness, and missed his uncle, who had taken another road to Herford. By the time Richard had ridden to Lowborough and back, all thought of his father's curse, and his father's forgiveness, or of his own faint resolutions of reformation had faded from his mind. He felt no anxiety except to enter speedily upon the inheritance so long withheld from him.

It was to a very unsympathetic, though not an unmoved audience, that Justin made his full and candid

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narration of the circumstances attending his stepfather's death. His mother and uncle set him down as a fool, and his brother as a knave. They sat looking at one another in silence when the avowal was ended, which none of them seemed inclined to break.

"This is a pretty kettle of fish," thought Mr. Watson; "why could he not come first to me, and let us talk it over quietly? We might have taken proper measures, without letting Dick know all about it. Now he will never rest without every inch of land and every penny of money passing into his hands. I'll be hanged if I know how the law stands!"

"Well, Justin!" exclaimed his mother, when the silence grew too much for her to bear, "I never heard such an extraordinary story in my life. I can take my oath I burned the will my poor husband gave me with his own hands. 'Take this packet,' he said, 'and let me see it burn away to a cinder,' and so he did. He gave the other packet to Justin, and said, 'That's my last will; and you can testify I'm of sound mind.' If you believed it was the wrong one, why did you not speak up at once, before the other was destroyed?"

"Do not you all understand?" asked Justin, "I did not know of the fatal mistake till we opened the one that was kept, the day after my stepfather's death."

"Well, well!" murmured Mr. Watson, who was overwhelmed by the intricacies and the importance of

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the case. He was growing a little puzzle-headed in his old age, and was in the habit of handing over all out-of-the-way matters to his younger and shrewder partner, Mr. Frost. He threw himself back in his chair, and pushed his spectacles high up on his bald forehead, staring at Justin with unassisted vision. Mrs. Herford tossed back her cap-strings, and smoothed her dress upon her lap, and gazed from one to the other of her sons.

"I always said right was right," she said, in her most oracular tone, "and I must say I always thought poor Dick was the rightful heir to his own father. It is a true saying, 'Murder will out.' Conscience is too much for us all, you see, Justin. I never suspected you were carrying such a burden on your conscience; and you a clergyman and a magistrate. I hope you won't be brought to a public trial; for that would be a great trouble to me, as you are my own son. I wonder what your poor dear father, Mr. Webb, would have felt, if he had lived till now! But I'm sure my dear Dick will not prosecute, for my sake."

"Don't be silly, Susan," growled Mr. Watson angrily. "What is Justin to be prosecuted for? It was the old man's own blunder, not Justin's; and Dick never gave a sign of being alive till nine or ten days ago. I can testify how Justin did his utmost to find him. And now he gives it all up nobly. He is not standing out for any terms for himself, as he might have done, and as I should have advised him

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I suppose the law would give the estate to Dick, for the disherison of an heir must be beyond question the intent of the parent; and in this case the old man plainly intended Dick to inherit. But remember you have not a tittle of evidence but what Justin says."

"I am quite ready to say all I have now said in any court of law," remarked Justin.

"Oh! go to law, go to law!" cried the old attorney, and beggar the estate to enrich the lawyers. What I advise is: let Dick have the inheritance of course, as his father meant him to have it, and let him allow you a younger brother's share; £300 a year or so out of it——"

"What?" exclaimed Richard, interrupting him.

"I say," continued his uncle doggedly, "you ought to be so grateful to Justin for giving you an estate, that you should allow him a fair income out of it. Why, man alive! nothing on earth could have shaken him out of it! There was no flaw in the will; not a doubt about it. We drew it up, and have the instructions still in your father's own hand. Everybody said you richly deserved to be disinherited, and you would be a disgrace to the name of Herford; whilst he was worthy of taking the name and the lands. If you don't give him a share, you are a mean scoundrel."

"Then I am a mean scoundrel," replied Richard, with a sneer. "I should call it mean to keep a

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brother out of his own for ten years or more. He ought to be thankful if I do not sue him for the income he has spent, of my money. Could you reckon how much would be coming to me if he had put it into trust ten years ago? By George! I've borne enough loss, without charging myself with any more."

"I wish for nothing from you," said Justin, "and I need hardly say it is out of my power to restore anything to you, of the spent income of the estate. If you had come back when you saw the advertisements begging of you to come, you would have entered into possession then, and I should have remained vicar of Herford."

"There should be a law that all wandering heirs put in an appearance once in seven years," said Mr. Watson, "or forfeit their claims and rights. Of course Dick must have the estates; but what is to become of you? You've fallen out of the ranks of the clergy almost, and there's small chance of a preferment for you. Besides, this strange story will run through the country like wildfire, and nobody will understand it rightly. I'll be whipped if I quite understand it myself. I think you might have kept quiet with a pretty clear conscience. If every man is to point out the flaw in his titles, property would always be changing hands. I'll go home and consult Frost; he's as keen as a hawk. But we must make some terms, you know. You cannot be turned out like a beggar on the world

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at your age; and with our pretty little blossom into the bargain. What shall you do with Pansy?"

"Oh! Pansy need not turn out," said Richard; "let her stay with her grandmother. There's plenty of room in the old place, and I like to see pretty girls about it."

"Pansy can stay with me, of course," interposed Mrs. Herford, "though she has been a little too much petted to be of any real use. This will be a sad blow to her, but it will do her good, I hope; poor, spoiled child! She won't be quite so flighty and high-spirited; not made so much of. If she was a little more humble, and kept herself more in the background, she would be really a nice girl; though I am her grandmamma. She looks much too big to be my grandchild," added the vain old woman, glancing at herself in the mirror, and lifting her shapely hands to the braids of fair hair upon her forehead.

"Pansy will go when I go," said Justin shortly; "I can make a home for her. I am ready to transfer the estates to you as soon as the necessary documents are ready. Of course it will be burdened by a dower of £300 a year to our mother, bequeathed to her in the later will?"

Mrs. Herford started from her chair in sudden alarm. Any insecurity as to her own income had not occurred to her. But now it occurred to her that the will which had been destroyed by mistake had left her absolutely dependent upon her younger

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son. Justin had paid her handsome allowance as regularly as Christmas and midsummer came; and she had never offered to take the least share of the household expenditure. The tears stood in her eyes as she gazed imploringly at Richard, whose face was impenetrable.

"There must be no charge upon the estate," he said. "If my father left me everything, everything I will have. You can surely trust my mother to me. This is a question to be settled between her and me; not between me and you. I've no intention of going to law in this affair. I said I'd forgive you, and I'll stick to my word. If you like to leave Pansy here, I'll be good to her; for she is an uncommonly nice young girl, and she'd help to keep the house alive. Not but what it will be alive when I'm master of it. We'll soon put some life into the place, I promise you."

"But, Dick, my dear, dear boy," said his mother pathetically, "I should like to have my money matters settled now, whilst we are all talking about it. Your father left me £300 a year, and it's no more than I ought to have. It must be made chargeable on the estate, as it is now. Thomas Watson, do open your lips, and speak a word of common sense about it, if you can."

"I don't know what to say," he answered. "If the will that was destroyed is to stand, he left you nothing; and if the other will is to stand, he left

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Dick nothing. It's a pretty kettle of fish. I think I'd better go home, and talk it over with Frost."

"I say I'll take care of my mother," said Richard, in an irritated tone. "My father left me all or nothing; and all or nothing I'll have. Besides, she has been saving money ever since my father died. If any provision is to be made for Justin and Pansy, it is her place to do it. She's their mother, and a sight closer relationship than I am to them. I've got to think it all over; and all I'll promise now is that I won't go to law, for Justin's sake—if he'll act fairly without it. I can't say anything fairer than that."

"I only wish to do what is right," answered Justin as shortly as before. It was of no use to argue with natures as selfish and shallow as those of his mother and brother. They could not understand him; that was impossible. The elevated mood, which had been his since the evening before, was descending, step by step, into a more earthly one. Not that he repented of his decision, or wished to recall his confession; but there was a blank disappointment hanging like a cloud over him. He scarcely knew what he had expected from his mother and Richard; but his own motion had been so deep and vivid, that he could hardly bear in patience the silly selfishness of the one and the haughty superiority of the other.

He left his three kinsfolk still discussing his narrative; for though Mr. Watson was puzzled and vexed, he could not bring himself to act on his con-

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viction that it would be best to go home and talk it over with his partner. Justin had put the matter out of his own hands; and so far that was a satisfaction. But there was no satisfaction in thinking of his successor, and of the change that Herford must speedily undergo. He went away, heavy at heart, to seek his daughter Pansy.

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CHAPTER XXXI.

TELLING PANSY.

PANSY had been living in a blissful dream ever since she had received Robert Fortescue's letter. No doubt occurred to her that anything could cross or trouble their love for one another. Now that he had spoken, and spoken in words so thrilling and ardent, it seemed as if a fiat from heaven had gone forth, pronouncing that their union had been appointed there. She was little accustomed to think of money or position; but if these crossed her mind at all in connection with her love for young Fortescue, they met the all-sufficient response that her father was Herford of Herford, and Sir Robert Fortescue's friend. The only drawback to her perfect happiness was that she had not yet received her father's permission to answer his letter.

Justin's mind was equally free from doubt with that of Pansy. He knew perfectly well that when he resigned his name and position in Richard's favor, Sir Robert Fortescue would peremptorily forbid all further intercourse between his son and Pansy. This

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had been the last consideration that had yielded to the stern cry of conscience. He would have given worlds to spare Pansy. His share in the sacrifice demanded of him was nothing compared with hers. The deep inward peace of having entered into the kingdom of God was troubled by the thought that she must suffer for his sin. How would the child bear it? For she was still a child to him; the little motherless girl who had never missed a mother's love through his exceeding tenderness. The little grain of wrong, like a grain of mustard-seed, had grown into a great tree, and the branches of it were spreading over the green pastures of the kingdom of heaven and casting dark shadows across them.

Pansy was pale this morning, and her eyes were somewhat dim. She had passed an almost sleepless night, for she could not go to bed quietly whilst her father was still absent from home, and it was past midnight when he came in. He had not seen her as she peeped through the door when he stole softly past to his own room, but she had noticed how wan and worn he looked, and how strange a light shone in his eyes. For the first time she thought her father's conduct unaccountable.

Why should he not rejoice when his brother came home again?—a brother so many years younger than himself, towards whom he might act almost as a father. She wondered at it. Pansy had never supposed that the withered, grumbling old man whom she dimly

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remembered was not her own grandfather, her father's father. Richard had very soon been forgotten in the village, as far as village gossip went, when Justin became master, and Pansy had never heard his name mentioned as the rightful heir. That her father possessed Herford Court in any other way than by inheritance as the eldest son was a fact of which she knew nothing.

She was musing on her father's unaccountable conduct when he entered her room. The change in his face since they left London struck her more forcibly than it had yet done. It looked older and grayer, and the air of genial self-contentment was gone. Pansy had been very proud of her distinguished looking father, and had compared all the men she had met with him, much to their disadvantage, excepting Robert Fortescue. As he came towards her she rose to meet him, her face quivering with emotion, and her lips too tremulous for speech.

"Pansy!" he said, in an agitated, broken voice.

"Father!" she cried, pressing close to him and looking with wistful eyes into his face.

"I have something to tell you, my darling," he said.

"Is it anything about him?" she whispered, a faint color rising to her pale cheeks; "have you any bad news about him?"

"No, no," he answered, "but what I have to tell you concerns us all, you and young Fortescue and

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me. It is a long story I have to tell, Pansy," he added sadly.

"And I love to hear long stories!" she said; "you shall sit down in your own chair, father, and I'll sit on my footstool beside you, and you shall tell me your long story cosily."

Justin had a chair of his own in Pansy's attic, a large old amr-chair, furnished with cushions worked in cross-stitch by Pansy's fingers when she was a child. She placed him in it and drew her own low seat beside him, imprisoning his hand in hers, and rubbing her soft cheek against it caressingly. For a minute or two the extreme bitterness of the trial that lay before him made it impossible for him to speak, and she lifted up her pretty girlish face in surprise.

"Father!" she exclaimed, "is it something very bad?"

"Very bad!" he echoed; "it will change all our life, yours and mine, Pansy. If I could bear the penalty alone it would be nothing; but you will suffer for my fault."

"Tell me all about it," she answered, fastening her eyes upon his face. She did not turn them away for a moment while he was telling his story minutely. He earnestly desired to make himself understood by her, to show her the intricate inner workings of his reason and judgment, and especially of his conscience. If she misunderstood him, how could he hope to make any human being judge him fairly? There was a

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pathetic patience and tenderness in his tone as little by little he unfolded to her the story of the past, and the special crisis of the present. Pansy's blue eyes seemed to grow darker and deeper as she listened.

"Who are you then, father," she asked, "if you are not my grandfather's own son—not Herford of Herford?"

"I am nobody!" he answered.

"And I am nobody's daughter," she exclaimed; "I am not even Pansy Herford!"

She dropped his hand, and left her seat beside him, flitting away to the oriel window, where she stood looking out, with her back towards him. He could see only her slim, erect figure, and her bright head bent down a little. Her brain seemed in a whirl. Had she really heard her father say that he had no right to this pleasant home of theirs? That he had already given it up to its legal owner? That he had not even a right to the very name they bore? If all this was to be swept away, her own identity must be swept away with it. She had never lived anywhere else but at Herford; she knew no other people. At this moment she forgot even her love for Robert Fortescue. If there was no Pansy Herford, what miserably deluded girl was she?

"It was cruel of him!" her heart cried in intense bitterness. Until this hour she had felt a passionate admiration of her father; a perfect, unquestioning faith in him. Pansy had never yet suffered from be-

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ing tempted; and it is hard for a young, innocent creature to make allowance for either folly or crime. That her father should have been guilty of anything approaching to a deviation from the strict path of rectitude; that there should be even the appearance of evil in his conduct, was unutterably intolerable to her. This was why he could not rejoice when his younger brother came home. Oh, if she could but reinstate her father in his grand pre-eminence over the other men! But that could never be. He was not the heroic, princely, sublime personage her fancy had delighted to portray him. He had fallen; and the deadly wretchedness of disappointment had taken possession of her heart.

"Am I to lose you also, Pansy?" he asked, after a long silence.

The words, and still more the tone in which he spoke, touched her to the quick. She was all that was left to him, that was clear. Since the morning he had given up lands, and friends, and fame, his name almost, in obedience to the demands of his conscience, he had nothing belonging to him but his little daughter. If she stood aloof from him he would be altogether forlorn and deserted. Pansy uttered a low cry, and clasped her hands together. She understood now why Diana Lynn still clung to her father. Nothing could set aside that relationship. Whatever he might become, or wherever he might go, he would be her father. With a second low cry, Pansy flew

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across the room, and flung herself into his arms. "Then I have my little girl still!" he said in an agitated voice.

"Oh, yes! yes!" she cried, clinging to him with all her might; "but it will make all the difference in the world to us."

"It will," he answered sadly.

"We shall be quite poor, you and me?" she said.

"Quite poor!" he repeated. "We must leave Herford."

Leave Herford! She had not had time to think of that. Leave the place that belonged to all her past life; the old familiar fields, the cliffs, the sea! Leave all the people whose faces she knew and loved, and who had cared for her longer than she could remember. She could quit the house, which was no longer her home, which had never rightly been her home; but how could she leave Herford? Yet the sudden recollection that for the last few days she had admitted to herself the possibility of living elsewhere flashed across her mind.

"Father," she said softly, "of course you will come and live with me when I am married? Richmond will wish it, I know. He thinks there is nobody in the world like you. Oh, father, may I not write and ask him to come over and hear all these things from you? I could never make him understand all in a letter. I must tell him how poor we are now. But none of us will mind about being poor."

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For a minute or two Justin did not answer, reluctant as he was to dissipate his daughter's unworldly ignorance. It was possible, certainly, that young Fortescue might remain true to Pansy. Justin's own disposition towards women was of a chivalrous and romantic turn. But he knew very well that Sir Robert Fortescue would set his face as a flint against the marriage of his son with a penniless girl. It would be best to prepare Pansy for the trial lying before her, with regard to this young and innocent love of hers.

"My dear child," he said, after a pause that had seemed intolerably long to her, "do you imagine his father will consent to his son being poor? What do you think Sir Robert Fortescue will say of me? He will call me an impostor, and a knave, or a fool. He might have been my friend, possibly, if it had not been for this love between you and his son; but now he must blacken my character to save his own."

"Father!" ejaculated Pansy, looking at him in terror.

"My darling," he went on, "if Robert Fortescue is worthy of you he will be true to you; and though you may have long and many troubles before you, you will be happy at last; all the happier for the trouble beforehand. You may write to him, Pansy, if you wish it. Only remember, love, remember, you have no mother to read your letter before it goes."

"I shall remember," replied Pansy.

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Justin stooped his head to kiss her fair, simple, young face. He would have purchased her happiness by a life of wretchedness for himself. But it was not possible to separate their lots. If any stigma rested upon him, it must rest also on her. His poverty was hers; his exile from Herford swept her from this peaceful home into the wide world, where he must seek his fortune. "The sins of the fathers are visited upon the children." There was no evading that law.

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CHAPTER XXXII.

MRS. CUNLIFFE'S TACTICS.

THERE was unbounded excitement in Herford and the neighborhood when it was known that Justin was about to relinquish the estate to his younger brother and the rightful heir. Leah Dart was satisfied that her discovery of the torn paper was at the bottom of it, and she told her story triumphantly about the village. His enemies, of whom he had a few, as every man has, asserted that he had forged old Herford's will, and that, though he was a clergyman and a magistrate, he had often passed sentence upon offenders against the law much less guilty than himself.

Richard Herford kept silent, and so did Mrs. Herford. Gradually it had dawned upon them that no power outside himself could have forced Justin into giving up the possessions he held. They saw that he had done a deed of which they felt themselves incapable. Mr. Watson was continually either praising Justin's nobility, or blaming his want of common prudence in not securing terms for himself;

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and by degrees the idea took root in their minds that on the whole Justin had done a great deal more than could have been expected of him. So they held their tongues, and spoke neither good nor evil.

But there was one person in Herford whose inmost heart quailed when the news reached her. Mr. Cunliffe was not at home yet, but he was coming at the end of the week; and his wife knew his first impulse and his fixed determination would be to resign his living in Justin's favor. It would never do to lose Herford Vicarage. Suppose dear Jenny became mistress of Herford Court, how sweet it would be to live close beside her! Mrs. Cunliffe put on her bonnet and hurried away to see Justin, and make sure there was no feebleness in him which would accept her husband's sacrifice.

Justin was busy in the library, surrounded by papers and letters, which had been the accumulation of years, but which must now necessarily be sorted out, and the greater part of them destroyed. "He looks fully his age," thought Mrs. Cunliffe, with some satisfaction; for though Justin was only four years younger than her husband, he had always looked ten years younger, and she had grudged him this trivial advantage. He met her with a friendly smile as she entered the room with a timid aspect and walked across the carpeted floor as if it had been paved with egg-shells. For Pansy's and Diana's sake, Justin was favorably inclined towards all their sex; and Mrs.

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Cunliffe was the wife of his dearest friend, so he gave her a cordial reception.

"My dear Mr. Herford," she said in her humblest tone, "surely, surely this terrible news cannot, cannot be true! You are not going to give up Herford to your brother Richard, as people say?"

"I have given it up," he replied; "the deed of gift is being prepared by our lawyer."

"Oh, dear! dear!" she cried, clasping her hands; "what a terrible trial! What a trial to us all—to you, and our sweet Pansy, and my poor Philip! Philip is bound up in his charge; his very heart and soul are in it. It would break his heart to leave his poor dear people, who are so attached to him. He thinks of his parish night and day—more than he does of me, his own wife, and seven children. Seven children, Mr. Herford! And there is no chance of the bishop doing anything for Philip. He has no influential friend in the world; and he never seeks a favor from any one."

"I hardly understand you," said Justin.

"Why! of course if you give up Herford Court, Philip will feel bound to give up his vicarage to you," she answered; "it will be his first act; I know it will. He never minds where he goes, or what he wears, or eats and drinks, so that he is at his work. He hardly thinks of the children, except their souls. Somebody must think of these things; and, oh! Mr. Herford, remember there are seven of them, and you

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have only Pansy. I ought to have sent Jenny away from home as a governess, but your dear kind mother is so fond of having her here, and she is hardly nineteen yet. I know we ought to give up our home, and all we have to you, but I can't see what will become of us all."

Her voice faltered, and she hid her face in her handkerchief. Unfortunately Mrs. Cunliffe was not able to weep easily; and, though she was in real alarm and terror at this moment, not a teardrop glistened in her eyes. But hiding her face had quite the same effect upon Justin.

"My dear Mrs. Cunliffe," he said earnestly, "this is quite a mistake of yours. Such an idea as taking Philip's living from him never crossed my mind, or any one else's except yours, I'm quite sure. No, be comforted. I'd sooner beg my bread than take his post from him."

"But Philip will be all on fire to do it, I know he will," continued Mrs. Cunliffe; "I believe he'd like to live in a wilderness, and be fed with manna rained down from heaven on purpose for him. He was quite content with one hundred and twenty pounds a year, and did not care how brown and frayed his clothes were, or whether he had meat for dinner or not. We've been so happy and comfortable here on three hundred pounds a year, and so many little helps from our good neighbors, it made me quite wretched to think of going away to only a curacy

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again. If you would only give me a solemn promise that you would not let Philip give up the living?"

"How solemn a promise do you want?" he asked with a half smile. "I assure you nothing on earth would prevail on me to take Philip's living. Besides, neither my brother nor I would like it. Richard could not like to see me still in the place, and he would not give the living to me, you may depend upon it. Send Philip to me as soon as he reaches home, and I will make him hear reason."

Mrs. Herford went away greatly comforted. She found special consolation in the idea that Richard would never appoint his brother vicar of the parish; and if so her husband's living was safe, and she was secure in the comfortable home Justin had given to them. She encountered Richard, and congratulated him with effusion. It might have been the dearest wish of her heart to see him reinstated in his right.

"A mean little humbug!" said Richard to himself, for he had no high opinion of women, such as Justin had. He did not trouble himself to be very courteous to her; but she did not resent his lack of courtesy. She was accustomed to think of herself as a poor vicar's wife, and it was perfectly easy to her to bow down to wealth and power, which at this moment were represented to her by Richard Herford, from whom she could quite humbly pocket any impertinence.

Philip Cunliffe reached home on Saturday evening,

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and as soon as he heard the startling news, he rushed off to seek his friend. He was ready, he said, with an eager light shining in his eye, to strike his tent and go out again, whither he knew not, under the same guidance as that which had brought him to Herford. Justin reminded him of his wife and children. His wife, he declared, was of the same mind as himself, and his children were but children, to whom every change was a pleasure, and who did not find decent poverty a hardship. "Why should any Christian deem poverty a hardship?" he asked, with a kindling face. Was not the Master poor? A carpenter working for his daily bread? And should the servant be above his master, the disciple above his Lord? It was only when Justin urged upon him that it was absolutely impossible for himself to remain in Herford after all that had taken place, and that some other vicar, more to Richard's mind, would be appointed in his place, that Philip Cunliffe consented, with tears, to retain the quiet and secure home his friend had given to him.

"We shall at least be a hundred a year poorer," he said, in a slight accent as of triumph; "if your brother continues to grant us that extra hundred, you will accept it from me, Justin? You will pledge yourself to that?"

"I think I may pledge myself to that," answered Justin, smiling at his friend's enthusiasm and ignorance of human nature, of Richard's nature in partic-

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ular. But this was hardly fair to Philip Cunliffe, who had had little opportunity of knowing Richard, and whose faith in his fellow-creatures was only a little less than his faith in God.

Nor was Justin quite fair to his younger brother. The two tall stalwart men were often seen at this time, passing from field to field together, apparently on good terms, while Justin explained to the new proprietor what he had done in the past and what he had meant to do in the future. Richard was gloomy and sometimes surly, but he listened to Justin's plans with close attention, marvelling all the time that he should retain so much interest in them now they concerned him no longer. To him the fields were so many acres of meadow or arable land. To Justin they were, each of them, living and breathing portions of his life, dear to him as the Garden of Eden was dear to Adam. He could not endure to think of them neglected and overgrown with thistles and weeds. The land had owned him rather than he had owned the land.

"How much do you reckon the estate is worth?" asked Richard one morning as they stood on a high point and could see a goodly portion of it stretching round them.

"In hard cash it is worth £50,000," answered Justin; "to me it is worth more than any money you could name."

"By George!" exclaimed Richard, "I cannot

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make out why you gave it up; not out of love to me, I know. Look here, Justin, I can't bring myself to make any charge on the estate for you or my mother; I must be free to do what I like with my own. But I promise to take care of her; and if you are ever in want of ten or twenty pounds—I don't mean once or twice, but as often as you like—you just let me know, and you shall have it. I'll stand by that."

He grasped his brother's hand in a close grip that spoke more than his words, which had expressed his thoughts more awkwardly than he had intended. He was neither eloquent in speech nor refined in feeling, but Justin knew from that moment that he possessed a good deal of influence over his half-brother.

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CHAPTER XXXIII.

UPROOTED.

IT was not in Justin's nature to linger at Herford, after having installed Richard as its proprietor. It was better to bear the pang of leaving his old life than dally with it. He had no oppressive cares for the future, uncertain and untried as it was. He was still in the prime of life—only a year or two over forty—and from his active, out-of-door mode of living, young for that age. He dwelt with some satisfaction on the creditable appearance he had made in London at several of the spring meetings, and relied with some confidence on the favorable impression he had made. To London he resolved to go. Where else, indeed, could he seek his living?

He was obliged to leave Pansy behind him, and for the first time in her life the child felt herself alone. It was yet but a few weeks since she had received the letter on which her hopes were still living, though they were growing fainter and fainter every day. She had written to Robert Fortescue a girlish letter, full of shy hopes and fears; but there had come no

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answer to it. Her father had been in communication with Sir Robert; but he had not shown her any of the correspondence. There was a blank, void feeling of disappointment and inexperience in her heart. She did not know what to think, what to believe. One thing she could not believe—that he would desert her.

Poor little Pansy! Her father was not only gone away, but she had altogether lost the father she had blindly idolized and reverenced. He was more worthy of her love than before; but she felt he was not the pattern of mankind, without a flaw, that she had fondly thought him. Was she not even now suffering for his sin? Her home, too, was lost, had crumbled away under her feet, carrying into ruin her charmed childhood. Even herself was gone down in this earthquake; for instead of being the queen of the little fishing-village, heiress to one of the loveliest spots of earth, and, as a result of this, worthy of being the chosen wife of the future Sir Robert Fortescue, what was she? The daughter of a penniless man, whose fair fame was under a cloud, and who was held guilty by some of a crime approaching to dishonesty.

Here was ground for amazement and for deep anguish of spirit. Not one grief, but many griefs, had met Pansy's soul on its delicate and dainty paths, and turned it aside on to the dark mountains. As long as her father was with her she had hidden her anguish

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under a placid smile that had almost deceived him, in spite of his tender and vigilant love for her. He knew she could not but suffer; but he had no idea how deep and keen her suffering was. He dared not tell her there was no hope for her young love, trusting it would die away gently for lack of nourishment. As soon as he could make a home for her in London she was to go to him.

But as soon as Justin was gone, and his quiet vision could no longer detect any change in her aspect, Pansy began to droop. The frank, blithe face, that had always been turned to him for sympathy, grew worn and sad; the springing step became slow and languid, and all the mournful amazement of this dire calamity spread itself around her. Jenny Cunliffe was too gay to have much fellow-feeling for her, for her spirits were kept in a constant tumult of glad surprise by her mother's lavish liberality, and by the attentions of Richard, who expended a good deal of his idle time upon her. Pansy held herself aloof from her uncle, whose return had worked all this wretchedness, and he felt somewhat sore at her avoidance of him. So she was bereft of Jenny's companionship.

Pansy shrank even from Diana Lynn. Her father had solemnly confided her to Diana, who had come over frequently to Herford Court, notwithstanding Mrs. Herford's coldness of demeanor, to see after her beloved charge. Next to Justin, Diana loved

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Pansy more than any one else in the world; but the girl's sick heart turned away from her. In this hurricane all her trust had been destroyed, and her faith and love uprooted. Robert Fortescue had forsaken her; her father was not the demigod she had fancied. All was lost. There was nothing before her to live for.

The old dames and the mothers in the village watched Miss Pansy with open-eyed anxiety. They made much of her, and bewailed in her ears the change that had rendered her no longer Pansy Herford of Herford. Old Fosse and his wife spent many sleepless hours thinking of her, and devised little schemes for giving her pleasant surprises. But surprises had no longer their charm for Pansy. They summoned a sad, faint smile to her pale face, which almost broke their hearts, and set them consulting with one another what they could do. It is not much that can be done for a bruised and wounded spirit.

"There's only One can comfort her," said old Fosse mournfully; "Him as carried the lambs in His bosom. She's like a poor lost lamb wanderin' away from the fold, and I must seek her. I must comfort her some way, if the Lord 'ud only put it into my hands to do. For I reckon it's Christian folks that must do the Lord's work for Him—the outside work, such as givin' one another a kind word and a helpin' hand. He'll do all the deep work himself."

"She's daunderin' along this moment to the light-

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house," said Mrs. Fosse in a pitiful tone; "all alone she is, poor blossom! It 'ud have been better for her if Master Justin had stuck to bein' only parson!"

That was the thought that was dwelling in Pansy's mind. To her utter amazement she found herself envying Jenny Cunliffe's lot, that lot which had seemed so hard and poor to her only a few weeks ago. If only her father was the vicar of Herford! Justin's love for this quiet parish was deepened into a passion in Pansy's girlish heart. Everything about Herford was glorified in her imagination. There were no cliffs, no bay, no landscape, no skies, equal to those that had stretched around her and above her from her infancy. To-day she was sitting alone on the stone bench under the lighthouse. The tide was up to the rocks at her feet, and the gulls were rocking on the waves or sweeping to and fro in their flight upon its surface, so near that she could hear the fluttering of their wings. There was an intense mournfulness upon all around her. The sea wore an angry and sullen aspect, as though brooding over some fresh outbreak, and the sky overhead was heavy and leaden-coloured. The cliffs, without the sunshine, looked sombre and more precipitous. Pansy gazed across the gloomy sea with still more gloomy eyes. She was almost glad there was a storm gathering. Storms seemed more natural than sunshine and soft breezes. Why should nature be joyful when she was in utter wretchedness?

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"My dear!" said old Fosse's voice close beside her, startling her out of her mood of solitary misery, "there's tempest in th' air. Come along, come along wi' me, down to your old mother Fosse as is lookin' out for you."

"Oh, Fosse!" she cried, "I'm going away to-morrow, and I shall never live here again. Never mind the storm. I want to stay here till it's quite, quite dark; till the tide has gone down and the sun has set. It is the last time."

"You are going to your. father, Miss Pansy?" he answered. The voice in which he spoke was questioning, but there was a tone of reproach in it. She was going to her father, yet she sat there in utter wretchedness.

"Yes," she said.

"Such a father as he is!" continued old Fosse tenderly. "When you were a little lass that couldn't speak a word plain, I've seen him carryin' you in his arms about wi' him wherever he went, like a mother. Many and many a time when I've met him hidin' you in his bosom against the cold wind or a sudden storm, I've said to myself, 'Ay! that's how my heavenly Father's bearin' me and carryin' me, and hidin' me from the tempest, though I don't know Him any better than that little lamb knows her father.' He's taught me many a lesson out of his love for you."

"Oh, Fosse!" exclaimed Pansy, with a deep sob of reviving tenderness towards her absent father.

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"He's taught me many a precious lesson," repeated Fosse; "out o' church, out o' church, I say, for he wasn't altogether to my mind in th' pulpit. But out o' th' pulpit there never was such a man, never! His life's been a grand one, always stirrin', and encouragin', and betterin' everybody about him. It's been a rare grand life so far, and it will be grander now he's got into the kingdom o' heaven. He was never very far from it, but now he's gone through the needle's eye, my dear. Maybe he seems stripped of everything he had before, except you, Miss Pansy, and you're the most precious thing he has; but he's followin' Christ and he's findin' the true riches."

"What do you know about my father?" asked Pansy timidly.

"I know everythin', my dear lamb!" he said, touching his cap in token of respect for Justin. "He came and told me all. It was a sore temptation, my dear, and he's broken through the snare. He's a grander man to me, Master Justin is, than if he'd kep' on bein' parson. He wasn't cut out for a parson, and he was cut out for a squire. I can barely see the mote in my brother's eye, though it's been big enough to keep him in darkness. But he's in the light at last, the clear light. 'He that loveth his brother abideth in the light, and there is none occasion of stumbling in him.' Master Justin stumbled, but he is on his feet again, and runnin' on his race now."

"The world won't think so," moaned Pansy half to

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herself. She was stung by the thought of her father being blamed. But if she could only regain her old confidence in his goodness and wisdom she would not feel so very desolate.

"We've nothin' to say to the world!" answered Fosse cheerily, "the world is under our feet. It 'ud be a strange thing for the eagle to stoop to listen to a crowd of chatterin' sparrows findin' fault wi' his flight up to the sun. Never mind the world, Miss Pansy. Shut your eyes to the world and keep 'em open to your father. There's only two loves, and they are set one over against the other, as far as the east is from the west. There's the love of the world and the love of the Father! 'If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him,' says John. There's no findin' a loop-hole through that. And Master Justin has passed from the one to the other, bless the Lord!"

Pansy felt greatly comforted. Old Fosse was looked upon as the oracle of the village—even Mr. Cunliffe spoke of him as an authority on religious matters—if he praised her father rather than blamed him, there could be no reason why she should refuse to restore him to his old place in her love. There was another sorrow in her heart of which Old Fosse knew nothing and guessed nothing. No one in Herford suspected that brief blissful dream of hers from which she was slowly and reluctantly awaking. She hoped they

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would never know it. She looked up to old Fosse after a long pause, with a wan smile on her face.

"I am not so sorry to go away now," she said simply. "I am going to my father, and I do not expect ever to know any one better than he is."

"There you spoke a true word, Miss Pansy," replied Old Fosse, "get a good grip o' that. Master Justin's a good man and a grand man. Don't you hearken to the world, my dear; the world's always makin' mistakes. It crucified the Lord of glory. There's many more folks beside me as thinks Master Justin one o' the best o' men. Not without his faults and flaws, my blossom! There never was but one man on earth that had no fault in him. But you be sure, whether your father's master of Herford or earns his daily bread like one of us, he's a good grand man. You hold fast by that, Miss Pansy. You're like the apple of his eye to him, and if there's the smallest change in you he'll feel it. Whatever comes, you keep faithful to your father."

But when old Fosse was smoking his last pipe by his cottage fire before going off to his duty at the lighthouse, he shook his head sorrowfully as he recalled Pansy's sad face and the dimness of her bright eyes.

"Our Miss Pansy's got a blow," he said to his wife, "she's like a wounded bird that can fly no more in the sunshine. Master Justin built his tower, but he had not counted the cost of it. What's done

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can't be undone, though it may be forgiven. Leaven cannot be taken out o' the bread, and evil cannot be taken out o' the life. We're pardoned, but we can't be let off. Miss Pansy must eat the bread her father leavened many a long year ago. Master Justin has eaten sour grapes, and her teeth are set on edge.

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CHAPTER XXXIV.

WORK IN LONDON.

WHEN Justin met Pansy at the London terminus he was startled with a sudden and quite natural surprise at the loveliness of his little daughter. They had never been separated for a fortnight before, as they had been now; and memory is but a poor substitute for sight. Her face had lost its girlish quiet, but it had gained a higher beauty by the half-unconscious mournfulness which looked out through her blue eyes. Her smile was no longer bright and ready, but it had a world more tenderness in it; and her voice was less ringing, but softer and lower. She was no longer a child with no shadow of a care upon her; and it brought a sharp pain to his heart to perceive the change.

The lodgings he had taken seemed intolerably dingy and miserable for Pansy, when he came to look at them through her eyes. He had surrounded her hitherto with everything that was pretty and elegant—little dainties lying altogether outside his own life, but forming an important portion of hers; and it

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struck him keenly how comfortless and mean this new dwelling-place would appear to her. But how could he alter it? He was a poor man in quest of work; no holiday task in these times.

"I hope it will be only for a little while, my darling," he said, as Pansy's eyes wandered from one shabby object to another; "very soon, as soon as possible, we will have a little home of our own, and you shall be the mistress of it."

"Father," murmured Pansy, hiding her head on his breast, and lifting her hand caressingly to his anxious face, "father, I do not mind where—with you."

She fully believed it, and meant it as she spoke. Anywhere with her father. She roused herself, and tried to chatter and laugh like the Pansy of old; stealing furtive glances at his altered face. For he too was changed. He looked old and grave compared with the rich and prosperous man who had found a welcome entrance into many a high circle. It was the close of the season, and the special meetings had long been over, and the speeches made at them forgotten, except by the orators themselves. The county families, and the bishop with his wife and daughters, who had taken so much notice of Pansy, had all gone out of town, and were scattered abroad. Sir John Fortescue only was in London, being kept there by the late parliamentary proceedings; but Justin fortunately had not come across him. The

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correspondence that had passed between them made them mutually desirous to drop all acquaintance.

London, therefore, was changed. To Pansy it was a mere labyrinth of hot and dusty streets, broiling under the August sunshine, with not a breath of fresh air to cool her fevered lips. Presently she found her way to Kensington Gardens, where there were green and leafy avenues and corners less frequented than others, where she could sit for hours undisturbed, panting for the breezy cliffs of Herford, and pondering over the lost days of the spring-time, when life had stretched before her as one long holiday of unbroken joy and gladness. Was it possible that only three months parted her from that blissful time?

But for Justin London was the hunting-ground for a livelihood for Pansy and himself. He had seen his bishop, and given him a plain, unvarnished account of his first fault, and of the restitution he had made; and the bishop had offered him the first living that should fall into his gift. But he could not resolve to enter the Church again for a living. He had felt no real call. During the seven years in which he had been vicar of Herford he had not kept the solemn injunction, "See that you never cease your labor, your care and diligence, until you have done all that lieth in you, according to your bounden duty, to bring all such as are, or shall be committed to your care, unto that agreement in the faith and knowledge

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of God, and to that ripeness and perfectness of age in Christ, that there be no place left among you either for error in religion, or for viciousness in life." He had not done that at Herford. It was clear in his memory how irksome the duties of his pastoral office had been. Now that he knew more of the kingdom of God, and of eternal life, he marvelled at his own temerity in rushing into so sacred a post as the ministry. It would be impossible to him henceforth to take the charge of souls as a means of gaining a livelihood for himself.

If it had not been for Pansy, he felt that he could have gone out as a missionary into some half-civilized communities, or some savage land, where his power of management and direction and his physical strength could have been turned to use. He would have gladly joined some mission enterprise that was full of difficulty and danger, and flung all his energy into it. He made one or two inquiries in this direction, but he did not push them, for there was Pansy to be considered, and Diana. What could these two do without him? He must have a very distinct, emphatic call, an unmistakable assurance that it was the will of God, before he could forsake these two, as the disciples had forsaken all to follow Christ.

Somewhat heavy-hearted, he bethought himself, at last, of the editor of a religious newspaper, whose acquaintance he had made during the spring, when he had been the welcome speaker on several platforms.

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They had held some friendly converse together whenever they had chanced to meet; and he had struck Justin as being a shrewd, sensible, keen-witted man. Such a man, if he was in truth a Christian, could be of service to him in his present straits. For Justin's funds were ebbing fast, though he had no dread of actual poverty. It was with some difficulty that he penetrated to the editor's office, and when he reached it he was received with stiffness and coldness by his former acquaintance. The editor rose from his chair when he was announced, and did not sit down again, though he motioned him to a seat.

"You do not remember me?" asked Justin, also standing.

"Quite well," he answered.

"You are, perhaps, aware of the change in my circumstances since I saw you last?" he resumed.

"Perfectly," was the reply.

"I have to begin life anew," continued Justin.

"You are in orders," interrupted the editor, "your bishop was speaking kindly of you, the last time I saw him, at Sir Robert Fortescue's. There would be no difficulty in getting a curacy or a small living."

"I cannot take a charge again," he said, "unless as a missionary, where I should have something more than the routine work of an English parish. I had no right to be in the Church when I was there. I cannot, however, offer myself as a missionary at present, till I see whether my daughter could rough it

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with me. I want something to do for a while that I can do here, till she grows accustomed to this great change."

"Sit down, Mr. Herford," said the editor, resuming his chair, "and let us have a friendly chat together."

In another minute Justin had entered once again upon a full narration of his story to this casual friend, whose face was half hidden from him by the hand that covered his eyes. When it was ended, he stretched out his hand to Justin, and grasped his heartily.

"There's one post I know of you could enter into at once," he said, "but the salary is small—not more than three hundred a year. We are looking out for a secretary for our mission to seamen. The duties are stiff. There are the chief seaports to visit, and to hold meetings at, where you would have to be the chief speaker; and now and then a sermon to preach on behalf of the mission. All the correspondence would fall to you, and the one clerk who is always at the office. There would be reports to write, and notices, &c., to newspapers, attractively put, you know. Of course we desire a man thoroughly in earnest."

"I would take it gladly, if you think me suitable," said Justin.

"You're the very man," replied the editor, heartily, "almost a seaman yourself. I shall see the committee this very night, and they will jump at you. We could never have hoped to get a man like you."

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"Thank God!" exclaimed Justin.

"What! for such a fall in the world?" said the editor. "You were introduced to me a few weeks ago as one of the leading men in your county; and now you are going to be the travelling secretary of a poor mission, yet in its infancy."

Their eyes met with a frank, comprehensive gaze, and both smiled as they shook hands again with a friendly clasp.

"Thank God!" they ejaculated at the same instant.

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CHAPTER XXXV.

HOMESICKNESS.

IT was still the early autumn, but though the sultry heat of the summer was gone, the streets of London, with their ceaseless stir and clamor of many sounds, were oppressive to the sick heart of Pansy, pining for her native place, with its fresh sea breezes and tranquil silence. Solitude in the midst of a throng of fellow-creatures was a new thing to her, for in Herford every face was familiar, and every tongue had something to say to her. There was something inexpressibly painful to Pansy's warm and girlish heart in passing a continuous stream of people, who might be so many phantoms hurrying away into some ghostly world of which she knew nothing, and whither she could not follow them. It was a relief to her when her father found a settled employment. He set about seeking a house for Pansy at once, in the suburbs, for he could not think of planting his little country-bred daughter in the midst of streets, where neither fresh air nor sunshine could come to her readily. Fortunately they fell in with a little old-

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fashioned cottage on Epping Forest, before the beauty of the autumn was over; and Justin, seeing that it struck Pansy's fancy, immediately offered himself as tenant for it.

It stood at a short distance from one of the main roads intersecting the Forest, upon an open space resembling a village green, about which were built a few scattered dwellings, most of them larger than the cottage, and one or two of them the mansions of wealthy people. Past the little garden in front of their new home swept an avenue of chestnut trees, on which the polished brown nuts were just bursting through their prickly husks. It was this avenue that had caught Pansy's eye at first. Behind the house stretched the long low glades of pollard trees and tangle of brushwood and bracken, and wild, uncultivated land, with shallow pools lying in the hollows, and here and there clumps of old oak trees and magnificent beeches which form the forest. This secluded spot, within six miles of London, seemed almost as free from the din of traffic as Herford itself. The wind, blowing softly through the trees and over the fields of fern and brambles, was cool and fresh. The sky was still as blue as in summer, and the leaves were only beginning to change their dark green for brilliant hues of yellow or crimson. Hollyhocks and sunflowers and some late roses were blooming in the cottage garden. It seemed a paradise to Pansy after two months of dreary solitude in the stifling streets of London.

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Pansy fought bravely against the heartsickness and homesickness that were pressing her hard and undermining her strength. She laughed as often as she had done in her old home, but it was no longer the merry, impulsive laughter, which could be traced to no cause except that of girlish mirthfulness. The servant, who had been recommended to them by the wife of the friendly editor, never saw her smile when her father was away. The absence of all familiar objects wounded Pansy's eye. The utter newness of the furniture, which she helped to choose herself, contrasted painfully with the dear old household chattels at home, as she still called Herford. All was strange, and to Pansy strangeness was terrible. Very soon her father was necessarily occupied with his new engagements, which were many and various. Some of his work he could bring home, and Pansy was never so happy as when he was busy among his papers, in the little room which was called his study. She could give him no help, but she could look in from time to time, or bring her sewing and sit opposite to him, watching him with wistful eyes, and ready to smile if he glanced up at her. What would become of him if anything happened to her? she sometimes thought. She was all that was left to him, as he was all that was left to her, by this wild storm that had wrecked all their former life.

But very little of Justin's work could be done at home. Usually he kissed her and bade her good-by

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soon after eight o'clock in the morning, and she saw him no more till after sunset, often not till late at night when he had any meeting to attend in the city. Oh! the long, silent, creeping hours! They were horrible to Pansy. She had never been accustomed to the indoor pursuits of girls of her age and station. She could drive, and row, and fish, and ride over the farm; she could spend hours in gossiping kindly with the villagers over their affairs, or she could teach classes of red-faced lassies in Mr. Cunliffe's school; but she could take no interest in solitary needlework, or painting, or music, when there was no one near to listen, or to look at what she was doing. She had been suddenly uprooted, and she could not take root again in this strange spot, and amid the chill and gloom of these strange circumstances.

But when her father was compelled to quit her for a whole fortnight's journey, on a deputation from his missionary society, the solitude and gloom grew insufferable. It was November, and rain and fogs had set in. The forest glades were a swamp, and the bare branches of the trees were dripping with heavy rain-drops. The little green before the windows held pools of shallow water, and the stillness surrounding the place was profound. It was utterly unlike any experience Pansy had ever had. There was nothing she could do but lounge in the easy-chair before the fire in their little drawing-room, amid the brand-new furniture, with a piece of needlework in her fingers.

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The London servant resented all interference from her uninformed young mistress, and hardly made a pretence of consulting her. It was scarcely daylight in the middle of the day, yet the long nights seemed worse to Pansy, when the lamp was lighted, but shone upon no happy faces, as it had always done at Herford Court. Everything had faded out of her life—joy, and sunshine, and companionship. Love was almost gone too, thought Pansy, for there was no one to love her now except her father. Her heart cried out bitterly yet tenderly for Robert Fortescue. How could he, could he, be so false to her?

These lonely, laggard, brooding hours were the worst mischance that could have befallen Pansy. Justin, when he opened his little daughter's letters, did not suspect how hardly his absence was telling upon her. She kept out of them the dejection she was suffering, and made the most of what she had to tell. It seemed not unlikely to him that her attachment to young Fortescue was but a passing fancy, which was dying out naturally and easily now she had proved him so unworthy of it. How gaily the child wrote of her new home, and even the gloomy weather! He might throw himself into his work with an unburdened spirit, and go home when it was finished, with no anxiety to mar his pleasure.

Yet all the while Pansy could hardly endure her life. The courage and cheerfulness she assumed,

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when she was writing to her father, forsook her the instant the letter was ended. She knew well where her father would tell her to seek for comfort; and she sought it in long hours of voiceless prayer, kneeling until her limbs were cramped but her heart no lighter. The poor child wanted her days of careless happiness back again; and these could never return. That which is crooked cannot be made straight. It could never be that Justin had not yielded to temptation; that Robert Fortescue had not been unfaithful. These were no sins of Pansy's; but at present she was bearing the heaviest penalty for them. Every hour of her sadness cried to God, though there was no desire for vengeance in her heart. Rather, if she had thought her sadness made God angry with them, she would have striven hard to conquer it, as she strove hard to conceal it from her father.

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CHAPTER XXXVI.

MRS. CUNLIFFE DEFEATED.

THERE were very gay doings at Herford, as Richard had promised. Where his new friends came from nobody knew; but they flocked from every part of the country, as though there had been a universal longing for Richard's reappearance. But they were all men of the same stamp; and the life they brought to the little fishing village was turbulent and boisterious. There was a constant coming and going of scampish-looking horse dealers, or rollicking seamen and dissipated townsfolk, who lounged about the village street and the beach, and were a grief of mind to all the sober-minded people of the place; and especially to old Fosse and Mr. Cunliffe.

Mrs. Herford, though fond of stir and change, did not quite approve of her younger son's choice of friends, who were in the habit of treating her with a rough familiarity very offensive to her. She was an old woman, very often in the way; and they were not over-careful to conceal that this was their opinion. Richard himself was apt to regard her from the

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same point of view, when she insisted upon taking the head of his hospitable but noisy table. He hinted to her that she would be better in her own room; but she could not brook the idea of superannuating herself at the age of sixty, before her hair was gray. Keep to her own room! Not as long as she could drag herself down to the rooms where she had been so long mistress. Though she did not feel that she was mistress now, as she had been in Justin's time, when every one treated her with perfect courtesy.

Until this boisterous stream of life had set in, Jenny Cunliffe had remained with Mrs. Herford; whilst her mother awaited with fear and trembling the moment when Mr. Cunliffe should wake up to the consciousness that his daughter was dwelling under the roof of the alien. Mrs. Cunliffe was building a splendid castle in the air. If only the master of Herford would propose to Jenny before her father interfered! She could make Jenny accept him; and in that case she felt that she could stand as firm as a rock against her husband, and insist upon Jenny becoming the mistress of Herford. She watched nervously, and angled as skillfully for Richard as any fashionable mother could have done. But on the other hand, Mrs. Herford was quite alive to the snares that were laid for her son. She did not care to lose Jenny, especially now Pansy was gone; like Richard, she was pleased to see pretty, light-hearted girls about the house. So she kept Jenny with her; but she

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was careful to thwart all the mother's deep-laid schemes.

Possibly Mrs. Cunliffe might have won the field if it had not been for her husband. She heard his solemn voice ringing through the house late one evening, after all the children were in bed, calling her into his study; and she obeyed it with a quailing heart and a sense of an impending crisis. He was standing at his open window, and across the narrow valley came the sound of very noisy music, and of a boisterous chorus, from the terrace under the windows of Herford Court. Mrs. Cunliffe took her place quietly at his side, and listened with him as she braced herself up for a stern conflict.

"How soon is Jenny coming home?" he asked in a tone that thrilled through her.

"I can hardly say, my love," she answered meekly. "Poor Mrs. Herford misses Pansy so much, it would be cruel to take her away too soon."

"She must come home to-morrow," he said.

"To-morrow!" she rejoined; why to-morrow, my dear? It would be impossible to take her away so abruptly; and I know Mrs. Herford cannot part with her at present. No, no, my love; we cannot have her at home again just now."

"Louisa," he replied, "it seemed to me but now that I heard a voice asking me how I was sanctifying the lives of those pertaining to me, so as to make them godly examples and patterns for my people to

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follow; and behold! I looked up, and saw the glitter of many lights, and I heard the sound of wild and godless mirth, in the house where my child is dwelling. It may well be my bounden duty to snatch her away from it this very night; but if not so, she must come home to-morrow."

"You would make Richard Herford your deadly enemy," she suggested.

"I cannot put his enmity in the balance with my daughter's eternal welfare," he replied.

"But, my love," she replied, almost weeping, "there is his eternal welfare to be considered. We are the only people who have any good influence over him; you must consider that. I have every hope of Richard becoming a truly good man; and he thinks so much of you! He is a little gay at present, with all these old friends crowding about him to welcome him into his property; but his heart is not with them. He wishes to settle and marry; and a good wife will save him from all these bad habits. You would be glad to see him with a good wife?"

"To be sure, if he will be a good husband," answered Mr. Cunliffe.

"He will be a devoted husband," she resumed, growing bolder, "if he can marry the girl he loves. Is it not written, 'the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife?' St. Paul had seen many a gay young man converted by a happy marriage, I'm sure. I have great hopes of poor Richard Herford, if he can only marry the girl he loves."

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"Do you know if he loves any one?" asked her husband, whose eyes were still fastened on the house across the valley.

"Suppose—I am only supposing—it should be our Jenny!" breathed Mrs. Cunliffe tremulously.

"Woman! Louisa!" he ejaculated. "I would far sooner follow Jenny to the grave. A young reprobate like Richard Herford! Give me my hat; and make ready a bed for the child, for she shall sleep at home to-night. The thought of it never crossed my mind, careless father that I am! How could you think of such a calamity, and not mention it to me?"

"I was only supposing," sobbed Mrs. Cunliffe; and oh! Philip, if he was only a good man, it would be so nice for Jenny! She would always be close to us, and you could take care of her eternal welfare. I shrink from sending her out as a governess, where nobody would care for her soul. If Richard was only converted; and I had such hopes he might be! Don't go to-night, Philip; it would wound them all so. And how could you manage your parish if you make him your enemy? Think a little of your parish and the immortal souls in it. Richard could hinder you on every hand. It would do Jenny no harm to stay one night more."

"I will fetch her first thing to-morrow morning," he said resolutely.

Early the next morning, therefore, before Richard

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had slept off the effects of the last night's revelry, Mr. Cunliffe was at the Court, insisting upon his daughter's immediate return home. In vain Mrs. Herford remonstrated, and represented her own solitary position, bereft at once of both Pansy and Jenny. He told her plainly, though sadly, that Herford Court was no longer a fit home for the young girl, and he marched away with Jenny, who was frightened into silence by his unusual sternness.

"Jenny, my child," he said, as they walked through the little coppice which sheltered the drive to the Court, "Jenny, tell me frankly if you love this Richard Herford."

"Oh, no, father," she answered, her face growing crimson under his searching gaze; "what made you think of such a thing? I like to be at the Court, everything is so easy and comfortable; and when Mrs. Herford is in a good temper it is all so pleasant; but it has not been nice at all since Pansy and her father went away."

"Easy and comfortable! Pleasant and nice!" groaned Mr. Cunliffe. "Is that what you are living for, my child? Oh! I have been very much to blame; I have been a careless father. God help me to look more closely after my duties!"

No angry fault-finding could have touched Jenny's heart so keenly as these words of self-reproach. The tears sprang to her eyes. To hear her father accuse himself for her shortcomings was a hundred-fold worse than having rebukes heaped upon her head.

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She stepped closer to him, and put her hand within his arm.

"Father," she said, with a little sob, "I'll try to like hard things, as you do. I'll do any disagreeable thing you like. I'll go out as a governess, and get my own living at once. My mother says you'll be poorer now, because you'll only have the bare living. I was talking about it to her; only she said I must not be so ungrateful to Mrs. Herford as to leave her now Pansy is gone. I don't care one pin for Richard Herford," she added, with strong emphasis, to assure her father, and restore the usual placidity to his troubled face.

"God bless you, my daughter!" he said with something of priestly dignity, "and may God keep you from every snare, whereby your young feet may be caught, and hindered from running in the way of His commandments. I shall have to part with you; but my punishment is far less than my sin. I shall not have to mourn over your unhappiness. I must seek a distant home for you."

Richard Herford muttered an oath or two when he found, on coming down to a late breakfast, that Jenny's pretty face was gone, and none but his mother's was left to meet him at his table. He made a call at the Vicarage during the day, but saw only Mrs. Cunliffe, who told him, with a beating heart, and in her meekest voice, that Jenny was going away from home, as a governess. "She'll be a confoundedly nice governess," said Richard; but that was all.

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CHAPTER XXXVII.

LEAH DART'S AMBITION.

THERE was a vague pian, half formed in Richard Herford's mind, that he would never marry, and that upon his death the estate should revert to Justin, or Justin's heirs. He knew perfectly well that his stepbrother had yielded obedience to a higher rule of right than any he himself felt. An uneasy love and respect for Justin was born of this conviction; and though he could not bring himself to make any compensation to him by giving up even a small portion of his hereditary possessions, he took pleasure in the idea of enjoying his life to the utmost, and of bequeathing anything that might be left at his death to his half-brother's family.

Richard also felt a very distinct dislike to the responsibilities and restraints of marriage. He had led a free and wandering life, and was already older in many ways than Justin. It had never been his lot to come across any marriage that had worn a smiling aspect in his eyes; and he had an unconquerable dread of linking his fate either with a vixen or a sim-

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pleton, whose claims would very much interfere with his own liberty and gaiety. "A short life and a merry one," was his motto, delivered boastfully at the dinner-table to his comrades. "He had no wish," he said, "to live to a decrepit, spent old age like his father." Old Richard Herford had taken pleasure in talking to his boy of the free and happy life his had been before his marriage; and these earliest maxims had taken deep root in his mind. He secretly believed that every girl aged into a silly or discontented old woman. Very different charms than those of poor Jenny Cunliffe were needed to break down these opposing opinions.

But of all this Mrs. Cunliffe was necessarily ignorant; and she could not quite forego her hope of seeing Jenny the mistress of Herford. Never was fond mother more difficult about a situation for a daughter. Nothing pleased her. Even the wife of the rural dean was baffled, and almost offended; as much offended indeed as one clergyman's wife could be with the wife of the vicar of the next parish. Mr. Cunliffe could not understand how his efforts to remove Jenny to a distant home were frustrated. Mrs. Cunliffe remained the meekest and humblest of women; and the objections she raised to every place that was open to Jenny were so plausible he could not gainsay them. He did not like Jenny staying in Herford, but he could not get her out of it. Even when Justin urged that she would come and spend the winter

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with Pansy, who sadly needed a companion, the welcome door was closed in Mr. Cunliffe's face.

"You should recollect, my dear," said Mrs. Cunliffe, in the severest tone she had ever used to him, "that there is no elderly lady like Mrs. Herford living in the house; and your friend Justin Herford is quite as likely to marry as Richard. He is little over forty, and a most attractive man. I really cannot consent to send Jenny there for several months."

"Louisa," he said reproachfully, "Jenny is quite a child; not two years older than Pansy."

"She does not think of him as an old man, I can tell you," she replied. "I ought to have kept her more at home than I did, but she was under my own eye, besides Mrs. Herford being at the Court. No, my dear; if you would like Justin Herford for a son-in-law, send her there; I have no power to prevent it, but she shall never go with my sanction. You may talk to her yourself, if you please."

Mr. Cunliffe felt quite miserable, and exceedingly perplexed. He could not fix the idea in his mind of his old friend becoming his son-in-law. Speaking to Jenny only made the matter worse, for she blushed and stammered, and said she would do what he chose; the poor girl having been made uncomfortable about Pansy's father. He was forced into declining the invitation; and Pansy was doomed to solitude for the winter.

But Mrs. Cunliffe was not the only person whose

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eye was upon the coveted position of mistress of Herford Court. Leah Dart, who saw him frequently at Rillage Grange, found food for her secret hopes in Richard's gay carelessness and familiarity. There had been a close intimacy between him as a boy, and Squire Lynn, in spite of the difference in their age; and this intimacy was renewed on a more equal footing. Thanks to Leah Dart and her supremacy, Squire Lynn was in better health than he had been for several years; and few days passed in which Richard did not visit Rillage or Squire Lynn was not seen at Herford. The boat, in which Justin and Pansy had so often run along under the cliff to Rillage, was still constantly sailing to and fro; and the path along the edge of the cliff was as frequently trodden. Diana felt the change more keenly than if all intercourse between the houses had ceased.

Leah had been making the most of her opportunities of studying the customs and manners of gentlefolks. She had Diana as a model; and though she felt the full difficulty of her task, confidence was usually stronger than despair. Richard took inexhaustible pleasure in Leah, and her airs and graces. She was always "good fun," he said to himself; and he paid her a good deal of attention, in which she failed to perceive the tone of mockery. He had not forgotten the faithfulness with which she had watched for his return; and he allowed her to believe that it was somehow due to her worthless scraps of paper

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that he had come into his inheritance. It was November—the same November that was so foggy and full of gloom for Pansy. Here the days, short as they were, were warm and sunny. The sea was as blue and calm as though the summer was still cradled on its rippling waves; for the storms of winter had not yet begun to lash them into rage. The meadows had scarcely a duller green upon them; and the autumn-tinted leaves were fluttering on the sheltered trees. There are no violent changes of the season close down on the edge of the sea, as Herford lay. The cliffs remained the same; and the black, sharp-toothed rocks over which the tide rolled twice a day were no darker or keener in November than in June. It was a month of quiet calm and rest, as if the winter's sleep was stealing on silently and softly to take earth and sky into its embrace. Richard Herford himself was not altogether insensible to the profound peace of this tranquil season, as he was crossing the cliff to Rillage. More than once he stood quite still, gazing absently across the sunny waters, not thinking, but vaguely wishing himself a better man.

He had been standing thus for a minute or two, watching the progress of a three-masted ship in full sail, with her white canvas reflected on the water, when he was startled by the sound of Leah Dart's voice close beside him. She was standing by him, dressed in a close imitation of Diana's simple and un-

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ornamented style; a serious sacrifice of taste and feeling for Leah, who preferred bright colors and showy trimmings, but who remained faithful to her model. She was doing her best to attain Diana's light and erect carriage, and Richard, as he turned, found her holding her head stiffly upright.

"Good morning, Mr. Herford," she said, with an affected smile.

"Good morning, Miss Dart," he answered, taking off his hat mockingly.

"Ah! now you're makin' fun of me, Master Dick," she said, blushing crimson; "I know you think I can never make a lady of myself; but I'm a better woman than most of 'em. They're a pack of idle, selfish, good-for-nothing hussies, except Miss Di—fit for nothin' that I know of."

"So they are, Leah," he assented good-humoredly.

"I know folks that think me quite good enough to be a lady," she continued, "those that know a right good woman when they see one. There are folks that are always tellin' me I'm handsome and clever, and could hold up my head with the best. Do you think that's true, Master Dick?"

"Quite true, Leah," he said; "it's truth, when truth is as sober as a judge. I've always been of that opinion myself."

A sudden pallor spread over Leah's brown and red face, and her brilliant black eyes looked at him through tears.

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"Oh, Master Dick!" she cried, "do you really think so? I've been tryin' to make myself a lady, for your sake. I've loved you all these years, and kept faithful to you, and never let any man court me nor kiss me—no, not once. It isn't because you are the master of Herford. If you was only a poor workin' man, I'd rather wash your clothes, and cook your victuals, and carry your dinner to the field, than marry the richest man in Lowborough; I would for certain. Oh! do believe me, Master Dick. And it's me that helped you to get your rights, and made you what you are; and I'm tryin' my very best to be a lady like Miss Di, that you think so much of; and I don't eat as much as I want, no more than she eats, and I've left off drinkin' beer, and I walk quiet and soft; and it's all for your sake, Dick!"

Leah's voice faltered with her intense eagerness, and the color did not come back to her cheeks as she stood opposite to him, her eyes riveted to his. It was a moment of agony to Leah. The mocking smile certainly passed away from Richard's face, but it changed merely into an expression of blank amazement. There was no answering passion in his eyes; yet never had he looked so handsome to her.

"Have you taken leave of your senses, Leah Dart?" he asked, after an instant's pause. The tears that had been standing in her eyes rolled in large drops down her cheeks, but they fell unheeded. She felt too wretched to wipe them away, or to con-

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ceal them. Richard Herford continued in a kinder and softer tone.

"Indeed, Leah, this is folly," he said; "such an idea never entered my head. Come, come; give up this silly notion of being a lady; it only makes you uncomfortable and ridiculous. You are a handsome, fine young woman, and be content with that. You may marry very well yet, if you don't look too high."

"I suppose you're too high?" stammered Leah, half angrily and half imploringly.

"Much too high, my good girl," he answered, not unkindly. I'm not a marrying man, and you'll never see me bringing a new mistress to Herford Court. Women are very pretty creatures in their places, and I'm fond of seeing them when they are as handsome as you—but I've no mind to marry."

"I've waited all these years!" sobbed Leah.

"Don't wait any longer," he said. "I'm awfully vexed you've set your mind upon me; but it's of no use, Leah. There's only one woman I ever saw that I would marry, and she would no more look at me than an angel from heaven. I'll tell you who she is, Leah, and then you'll know there's no chance for me—not if I waited a hundred years. It's Diana Lynn!"

"Miss Di!" exclaimed Leah.

"Yes," he replied, looking down at Rillage Grange, which lay below them, with a disconsolate smile; "I

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might be a good man yet, if Diana would take me in hand. You can keep a secret, I know, and you will keep that for me. But you get spliced as soon as you can, Leah. There's no chance of having me."

"That's what I mean to do," she answered, wiping her eyes. "I'd sooner wed you than the grandest of 'em all; but if you won't make me a lady, somebody else will. You'll hear of my weddin' very soon, Mr. Herford."

She dropped him a rustic curtsey, half defiantly, and tossed her head as she turned her back upon him, and walked away in a very dignified and ladylike manner, as she flattered herself. Richard watched her till she was out of sight, and then he laughed aloud, till the rooks and seagulls on the cliffs around flew out, cawing and screaming with a clamor that drowned his laughter.

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CHAPTER XXXVIII.

SHE WOULD BE A LADY.

LEAH was not without a definite plan in case of disappointment with Richard. She loved him; but if her love was lost, why should her ambition be ungratified too? She hurried back to Rillage Grange, and entered Squire Lynn's sitting-room, with the firm, vigorous tread natural to her. He looked up at her with admiration, mingled with a little fear.

"I'm come to give you notice; I must leave," she said abruptly.

"Then what is to become of me?" he asked in a peevish tone. "Do you want me to be killed by bad nursing?"

"No; but I'm goin' to leave you," she answered. "There's Miss Di."

"My daughter is not strong enough," he said. "Come, Leah, you know I cannot part with you. What can I do to keep you?"

"Well, it's not your fault, and it's not my fault," replied Leah, casting her eyes to the ground; "but

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folks are beginnin' to talk; they say you ought to have an old woman about you."

Squire Lynn sat silent, and Leah stood not far from him, crying. It was not the first time that the idea of securing Leah by marrying had occurred to him, and he was not altogether averse to it. But there was Diana! How would she feel if he made Leah mistress! He was fond of Leah as his nurse; but as a gentleman he could not help dwelling a little upon the disgrace and ridicule he would bring upon himself by marrying his servant. Yet if she left him it was much the same as having his death-warrant signed and sealed. He had learned to lean upon her more than he did on Diana. She would allow him to run a certain length in his favorite vice, while Diana tried to prevent him taking a single step. Leah could restrain him from fatal excesses, by indulging him a little, but Diana could not restrain him at all.

"It would be the death of me for you to go," he said.

"Nobody can nurse you like me," she answered; "but I've my name and character to look to; it's all I've got. I must go."

"Leah, would anything prevail upon you to stay with me?" he asked, trembling and shivering.

"If you'd make a lady of me," she suggested, feeling that she ventured all on this one chance.

"It's only my daughter I'm thinking of," he an-

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swered querulously. "I'd marry you to morrow but for her."

"It shouldn't make no difference to Miss Di," she replied, with repressed eagerness; "I'm very fond of her, and there should be everything the same. If you'll make me a lady, I'll be true and kind to you, and nurse you better than ever I nursed you before; but if not, I must go. Choose for yourself."

"You can't go, Leah," he said, "and there's an end of it."

But the end of it, so far as Leah's ambition was concerned, did not come till she was driving from Lowborough to Rillage as Mrs. Lynn some few weeks later. It was a profound secret as yet, except at the church where they had been married. She heaped warm wrappers about her old husband, and kept both the windows of the carriage closed, though she was herself gasping for the fresh air. But she leaned back with a languid and indifferent air, such as she had noticed in carriage ladies, and looked out with partially closed eyelids on the narrow glen running down to the sea, of which she was now mistress. It mattered little to Leah that the hedges were broken into gaps and the gates falling from their hinges, or that there was every symptom of bad farming and reckless neglect. The tumbling-down old house did not seem mean to her. She was the lady of Rillage Grange, and her heart was swelling with satisfied ambition. Upon Squire Lynn's thin arm she laid her

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large, strong hand, encased in white kid gloves, for Leah knew that a bride must wear white gloves, if she had no other bridal finery.

"John," she said, and the old man started as if she had shot him; "I hope you will live a long while!"

"I will live as long as I can, my dear," he answered shortly. Old times had been busy with him, and he had been thinking of his first marriage with Diana's mother, the last Sir Robert Fortescue's young sister, and the belle of the county. He felt unreasonably irritated by Leah calling him John, though she had no kind of hesitation in using his Christian name. She was his wife, and meant to be a good wife, but she did not mean to be Mrs. Lynn of Rillage Grange, yet live in it as if she was merely Leah Dart.

She was very kind to him when they reached home, and waited on him, and fussed about him, until he felt that, after all, he had not been guilty of an utter blunder in paying so highly for her care. When he had had a comfortable lunch, and was lying down for a nap on the sofa, she gave a last touch to his pillows.

"John," she said, "I'm goin' to tell Miss Di."

Squire Lynn felt a twinge of grief for Diana; but he was too comfortable to experience any deep regret. He could not see what difference his second marriage should make to her; Leah would be very much the same as she was before, only there would be no risk

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of losing her. At any rate, he must leave them to settle the matter between them, and he fell into a gentle doze, being tired with the day's unusual exertion and excitement. His new wife, drawing on her white gloves again, went slowly and somewhat hesitatingly upon her errand, and entered Diana's parlor with a beating heart.

"Miss Di, I have something to tell you," she said respectfully, standing just within the door; for Leah held Diana in a kind of sacred reverence.

"You are not going to leave us, I hope?" answered Diana. She had fancied Leah was growing restless and discontented, and she looked at her earnestly. Her gaudy wedding bonnet and her white gloves brought a flickering smile to Diana's grave face. Leah stood silent for a minute or two, twisting and untwisting her fingers in evident embarrassment.

"Miss Di," she stammered at last, "we've been married this mornin', but it shan't make no difference to you; I'll wait on you almost like a servant. I've never been in service, and I've always kept to myself, though I've been laughed at for makin' myself a lady. I've never been at all in company with common folks, Miss Di."

"Who have you married?" asked Diana smiling. "I hope it is a good marriage, Leah."

"It's him: your father; Squire Lynn," muttered Leah. "We were married this mornin'."

"My father!" exclaimed Diana. Her head drop-

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ped upon her hands, and she was silent, struck dumb with sudden pain and amazement. This was the end then of her long and patient self-sacrifice! She could not help thinking of how she had refused to be Justin's wife, and had spent all her youth and early womanhood at her post as guardian over her father; and now he had set this ignorant and vulgar woman at the head of his house. It was all to end in Leah Dart becoming the wife of his old age.

"Miss Di, why don't you say somethin'?" asked Leah, after a long pause, rapping the table impatiently with her knuckles. This utter silence alarmed and irritated her. "Don't treat me like a baby," she added; "it shan't make any difference to you, I say."

"It must make a difference to me," answered Diana gravely. She felt bewildered still. The suddenness of the announcement had stunned and shocked her. Yet her clear calm judgment quickly recalled her to the true position of affairs. If what Leah had said was true, it would do no good to resent her father's conduct. "Sit down, Leah;" she added; "you are my father's wife, and I cannot behave to you as his nurse only. Let us talk over this change quietly. I do not want to say a word that either you or I might regret. How did you and my father come to think of such a thing?"

"He was afraid of me leavin' him," said Leah, dropping down into the chair which Diana pointed out; "and I wanted to be a lady."

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"A lady!" repeated Diana with a half smile.

"I like to be made much of as well as other folks," replied Leah, tossing her head, "and do nothin' all day but sit in a parlor, and drive about in a carriage, and play music, and paint pictures. Just like you do, Miss Di."

"Why, Leah!" exclaimed Diana, "I would have changed places with you gladly. I wish I had no duty except to earn my own living. Do you know that I have never left this house for a single night for fourteen years? I have never been able to have my own friends to visit me here. It is years since I saw the face of any of my brothers and sisters, though I have loved them dearly. My father would not suffer them to come here, and I dare not leave him—no, not for a night. I have been obliged to sit up late to see him safe in his own room—yes, safe in his own bed, before I dare sleep myself. I have never slept soundly and peacefully as you sleep. And now my long task is over, I have scarcely a friend in the world. My brothers and sisters are scattered, and have no home to give me."

"You won't go away, Miss Di," interrupted Leah; "I never meant to turn you out."

"There is no use in my staying any longer," she said sadly; "it may have been a useless sacrifice all along, but I believed it to be my duty. I found this cross close at my feet, in my own home; and it seemed to me that I must take it up and bear it

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for Christ's sake. Now you will have to bear it, Leah."

"Oh! Good sakes!" cried the new wife, bursting into tears, "I'll do my duty as well as I can. I'm going to be a good wife to him, though he is forty years older than me. But don't you go away from your home for me, Miss Di."

"I have a home to go to," said Diana, with a faint flush on her clear pale face, and a smile stealing round her lips; "you have set me free, though you have put yourself into bondage. You'll not be free to come and go as you please."

"Oh! I shall be free enough," answered Leah. "I can manage John, though you can't. I'm going to keep him sober, trust me, now I'm Mrs. Lynn. I'm harder than you, Miss Di; and it'll not fret me to death to hear him cursin' and swearin' and going into 'rageous passions. I dare say God Almighty saw I was fitter for it than you; and I'll try to do my duty by him. Couldn't you wish me good-luck just once?"

"My poor girl, I wish you all the happiness you can have," replied Diana; "but do you know how poor my father is? He has barely a hundred a year; and if I had not given him my income he would not have had enough to live upon. He has mortgaged his land so deeply that almost every penny goes to pay interest. Do you understand, Leah? we have less than three hundred a year, and two hundred of

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that is mine, my own. He can give you nothing when he dies; not even the old furniture in this house. There will not be a farthing for you; he has spent all he has already."

Leah's face grew pale. It had never crossed her mind that gentlefolk could be actually poor; though she knew that the place was falling into ruins for want of necessary repairs; and that the whole household establishment consisted of an old servant-woman and a young girl under her. Squire Lynn had every comfort and many luxuries; and he always spoke carelessly of expense, as of a thing not to be considered for a moment. Leah stared hard at Diana. She seemed to be conscious for the first time of how shabbily she was dressed, and of how careful she was of all personal expenditure. Leah clasped her hands together, with an almost tragic gesture of consternation.

"Miss Di!" she cried, "is it true? Couldn't he leave me well off, like a lady? Should I have to go to service again if he died? Oh! Miss Di, it's very cruel. He's forty years older than me; and I might have wed myself well over and over again but for thinkin' of bein' a lady. Oh! don't go away, and take your two hundred pound with you. We couldn't hardly keep a servant if you did, and it's a big house; and it would be hard work to do all the cleanin' and cookin', and wait on him into the bargain! Oh, Miss Di! if you'll only stay, I'll be just the same as if I wasn't his wife."

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"Nonsense, Leah," said Diana sternly; "you are his wife, and that makes all the difference to me. Do you suppose I could ever forget it? No; I stood nearest to him, and it was my lot to bear the continual burden of his poverty and sickness and vice; but you have taken my place. My task is mostly over."

Yet Diana spoke sadly. She had always believed that, in spite of all his failings, her father loved her, and leaned upon her as much from affection as from weakness. It was a shock and a bitter disappointment to her to discover that he had sunk low enough to practice so much cunning and concealment, as to contract a secret marriage with his servant. It was a release to her; but it had not the softening influence accompanying it that would have come with her father's death. Her freedom had a chilly sense of disgrace and chagrin clinging to it.

"Go away now, please," she said, after a pause, to her father's second wife. Leah had been collecting herself while Diana was silent, and considered it would be best to put a good face on the matter, even if it should prove a great blunder. Her little world must not see that she had made a grievous mistake in climbing to the height of her ambition. If marrying a gentleman could make her a lady, then she was one assuredly; and who had ever heard tell of a Mrs. Lynn of Rillage Grange going out to service? Such a thing could not be; it must be impossible!

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Still she felt herself at sea, in unknown currents. She dropped a deeper curtsey than usual to Miss Di before quitting the room.

"If you please, Miss Di," she said humbly, "I mean to make him a good wife anyhow. I've took him for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer; and I'll stand to it. I know Uncle Fosse 'll say it's the Lord's doings; for I'm fitter to manage him than you ever was, Miss Di."

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CHAPTER XXXIX.

IS IT GOOD NEWS?

A FEW evenings later Justin was walking slowly along the frosty road leading homewards from the nearest station, under the starry darkness of a wintry sky. He had been intensely happy all day in his office; for the one thing denied to him in his days of prosperity was now falling into his hand. He had missed Diana's companionship sorely. Until this complete separation, he had not known how dependent he was upon her sympathy and appreciation. Pansy was scarcely a companion to him; she felt no interest in his thoughts or work, and his work was growing more and more congenial to him, as it brought him into contact with many minds. With Diana, and with this constant stir of intellectual life, so different from the stagnation at Herford, he should feel that he had gained, instead of losing, by the surrender of Richard's birthright.

But as he loitered along the road he could not close his heart to some intrusive dread as to how Pansy would receive Diana as her mother. He had

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always been told that she was a spoiled child, and that he spoiled her, and he was not quite sure that this was not true. He felt a chivalrous devotion to his daughter. She had been the first object on whom he had been able to lavish the passionate tenderness of his heart, for his first marriage had been a mistake of his boyhood. Pansy, his little motherless child, with her utter dependence upon him, and her pretty baby ways, had struck a chord which had never ceased to vibrate. If she was not happy he could not be.

He had been very anxious about her of late. The first cold of the winter had nipped her, as it had nipped the blossoms in the garden. Justin felt through every fibre of his being that Pansy was sick both in body and mind, though she made vain attempts to be the shadow of the merry, light-hearted girl she had been a year ago. He had called in a doctor, who told him she was suffering from nostalgia, which he could remember as attacking himself in all its subtle force whenever he was absent as a boy from Herford. But Pansy would not listen for a moment to any mention of going back to Herford Court. She laughed at the idea of homesickness, and assured her father he was troubling himself for nothing. But nevertheless Justin was troubled.

What could he do if she steadily set her face against Diana? He could hardly breathe as he thought of it. It would be dooming his delicate lit-

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tle Pansy to death to force her into any conflict like this. If it should prove a fresh grief to her after all the storm of trouble that had been beating against her, what must he do? Diana could no longer live at home, and he could not give her up. She must come to him now, at last. If Pansy had been about to marry Robert Fortescue, how timely this last event of Squire Lynn's marriage would have been. That cruel blow was the true secret of Pansy's illness.

It was near the close of the year, a December night, frosty and clear, with the stars glittering, and the hoar-frost pencilling out every leaf on the bushes and brambles, and every blade of grass in the forest. He paced to and fro under the bare chestnut trees, looking up to the lighted windows of the little room where she was waiting for him and wondering what kept him away so late. At length, weary of his own wavering, he rang the bell and rushed quickly up stairs, so quickly that Pansy was not quite prepared for him. She was leaning back languidly in her easy chair, with her eyes closed, but as he entered she sprang up with a welcome of forced gaiety. He took her chair and drew her on to his knee as if she was still a little child.

"I have some news for you, my darling," he said.

"Good news?" murmured Pansy, her color going and coming, and her heart beating fast under his arm. She had only one idea of good news. Had he seen Robert? Was it all oing to be right again?

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She believed that if he and her father could only see one another, all must come right.

"I hope so; nay, I am sure it is good news," he answered; "you are not going to be left alone much longer. I have found a companion for you."

"Is Jenny coming?" asked Pansy with a dreary sigh.

"No, not Jenny; Diana," he said, afraid to look into his daughter's face.

"Diana!" she repeated, clasping her hands; "oh! father, I am so glad. She will help me to be good. I've not been very good lately, I know. Did you really say Diana?"

"Yes, my darling," he said delightedly. "Diana, our Diana! Do you love her?"

"Oh yes!" she answered with fervor; "I love her next to you, only a very, very long way below you, father. Almost next to you," she said, her pale face growing red again as she remembered her love to Robert. "How soon will she come?" she asked after a while, with her hands on his shoulders and her shining eyes looking eagerly into his. "Is she coming directly?"

"Directly," he repeated, in a tone of unconscious gladness; "for her father has married Leah Dart."

"Oh, how horrible!" cried Pansy. "Why do men marry again ever, father? You have never married again."

Justin felt himself silenced by this unfortunate

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question. He stroked Pansy's pretty head, which was now lying on his shoulder, whilst he sought for words in which to explain himself. He was fearful of wounding her, and it was evident that she had no idea of what he wished to say.

"My darling," he said caressingly, "I should have married Diana years ago, when you were almost a baby, if she would have left her father. But she would never leave him to sink into lower degradation, though I could have shielded her from every sorrow. I can shield you both from trouble, or at least I can share trouble with you. You will not be one whit less dear to me, Pansy, when Diana is my wife."

"Do you love her very much?" asked Pansy. Her lips were close to his ear, and he could not see her face, but her heart was throbbing faster than ever.

"More than words could tell," he answered.

"Are you happy?" she whispered again.

"Happier than I could tell," he said. "Diana will be your mother, my darling. You will take her for your mother? my only fear is for you."

"Don't be afraid for me," she answered. "I love her very, very dearly; only a long, long way below you, father."

But as the evening wore away, Pansy's large bright eyes watched her father more wistfully than ever. She had never regarded him in any other light than as her father, and she had not criticised or scanned his face closely. Now she was looking at him through

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Diana's eyes, and she wondered at herself that she had never guessed the love between them. And they had had the patience and the faithfulness to wait all this time for one another! It was the patience Pansy knew she should lack, not the faithfulness.

She could not grudge her father his happiness, yet it made her own lot more blank. It seemed another element in the strangeness that surrounded her. There was a feeling of distance creeping in between her and him, as she thought of him marrying again, even though Diana was going to be his wife. How was she to behave when he was no longer simply her father? When she met his eyes she made haste to smile back upon him as if she too was rejoicing, but she felt a sorrowful forlornness all the while. Pansy cried herself to sleep that night. Her heart was restless, and even this once stable and unchanging love was growing an uncertain resting-place for it.

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CHAPTER XL.

DISMAL CONGRATULATIONS.

THERE was no reason for delay, and Justin and Diana were married during January in Herford church, as Rillage Grange was just within the parish boundaries. The marriage was kept so close a secret that no one but old Fosse was admitted to witness the ceremony. Diana's father gave her away, with many misgivings as to the exchange he had made in taking Leah Dart in her place, and Leah herself was present at Diana's own request. It was an intense satisfaction to her to sign her name as witness in the parish registrer, Leah Lynn; it was the first time she had had occasion to write it, and her fingers could hardly hold the pen. Fosse signed his name in large, crabbed characters, and clasped his hard knotty hands over the book, as he was used to do over his Bible.

"Now the Lord love them and bless them!" he said; "surely it's a great mystery! Ay! it's an unspeakable mystery that men like us, wi' our angers and tempers and sins, should stand in the place of our

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Lord to His church! Yet it's true! we live and toil for the wives at home, and life and labor 'ud be unbearable if we had'nt them to think of. And the Lord's life of toil and sufferin', what would that have been if He hadn't borne it for His people that He loves? It would have broken His heart long before He came to Calvary and the cross. There's only two women here," he continued, looking round at Diana and Leah, with a smile lighting up his wrinkled face; "but let every one of us in particular so love his wife even as himself."

"That is what I have always done, and shall continue to do," said Squire Lynn, turning to Justin. "Diana has always been a good daughter, and I trust to you to make her a good husband. We will bid you farewell here, and wish you all happiness. You are going up to the Court to inform Mrs. Herford of this event?"

"Yes," answered Justin, "we must not leave without seeing my mother."

But there was no pleasure in the fulfillment of this duty. The secret had been kept from her, or otherwise it would have been no secret; but they knew what reproaches they would have to meet. As yet it had not oozed out even in the village, and by going at once to Herford Court they would prevent it reaching her through any other means. The house seemed quiet and desolate as they drove into the old court-yard and alighted at the ancient doorway.

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Richard was away from home, and the place was empty of guests; even Jenny Cunliffe was not allowed, on any pretext, to visit at Herford Court; though a desirable situation had not yet been found for her. Justin led Diana through the place, no longer his own, to the sitting-room, where he had heard old Richard Herford's will read; and there sat his mother, disconsolately reading an old novel, and surrounded by unbroken stillness.

"Good gracious, Justin!" she ejaculated as they entered; "Justin and Diana Lynn!" she added; but words failed her, as her elder son, after kissing her smooth cheek, introduced Diana to her as his wife.

"Your wife!" she repeated, gasping with amazement and incredulity.

"We were married this morning," Justin hastened to explain, "and are just come from the church to tell you before any one else knew. Diana promised to be my wife eleven years ago; and now her father has married again, she felt herself free to keep her promise. Mother, we have loved each other dearly these eleven long years."

"Well! well!" exclaimed Mrs. Herford ungraciously, but kissing Diana's offered cheek; "I always thought there was something in the background. You've been very close about it, though it will not make much difference to me as it is; and I wish you joy. Oh, yes, I wish you joy. Though how you are to live on such an income as you have, Justin, is

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quite a mystery to me. Pansy, too. I wonder how Pansy will like it. Now you'll learn how unreasonable children are in setting their faces against second marriages. You never liked me marrying again; and you're going to have the same trouble I had. However, it is your own affair; and I congratulate you with all my heart, I'm sure."

She tossed back her lace lappets and stroked her hair with her white hand as she was wont to do. Except for an additional line or two on her smooth, round forehead, she looked precisely as she had done since her husband's death.

"I should have liked to have known you were going to be married," she said peevishly; "it is disagreeable to be taken by surprise in this way. My own son, too! There is so little stirring just at present, it would have been quite a diversion to decorate the church, and get up a breakfast. Some of the county people would have come on Diana's account. I dare say Sir John Fortescue might have been prevailed upon. But you never did ask my opinion, Justin, or you would never have taken the estate, and then given it up again, as you did. I never knew anybody make such blunders as you do."

"I have made no blunder to-day," he said joyously. His mother's peevishness had no power to touch his happiness.

"That remains to be proved," she resumed. "'When poverty comes in at the door, love flies out

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at the window ' You might have been such a comfort to me! Richard invites all the riff-raff of the country here; racing-men, and blacklegs, and mountebanks of every description; and then he tells me I'm too old to mix with his friends—they are not used to old women! Those are his very words, I assure you. He says my place is to look after the maids and the cooking; as if I was only his housekeeper. And, Justin, I can't get him to pay me my income, and there are two quarters passed, and he owes me £150—ONE HUNDRED AND FIFTY pounds—and he says he has not a penny to spare. And now you have married again; and I have no comfort in either of my sons."

She melted into tears at the recital of her own griefs. There was a dim misgiving in her mind that Justin would expect some handsome wedding-present from her; and she was feeling miserably poor as well as lonely. Richard was not paying her allowance, and he was squandering money away on frivolous and unworthy objects. The prosperity of Herford, so carefully built up by Justin, was already in danger of being destroyed by Richard's extravagance.

"I will write to Richard," he said.

"I don't believe he will ever do any good," moaned his mother. "Twenty times a day I'm wishing you and Pansy were back again. I was mistress then; and I will say that for Pansy, that she never flew in my face, though you spoiled her so. Poor Pansy!

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she is going to pay for her happy times now, with a stepmother. Don't interrupt me, Justin. Of course she is all perfection in your eyes; and I dare say she is perfect; but all the same Pansy will not like it. Diana will pardon a grieved and disappointed mother for speaking out plainly."

"Pansy and I know each other well, and love each other dearly," said Diana gently.

"Oh, yes!" she answered, shaking her head; "but nobody ever did love a stepmother, you know. I don't know what would have been done if Justin had brought you here. I could not have given up the position my poor dear husband left me; and there could not have been two mistresses of Herford Court."

"What will you do if Richard marries?" asked Justin. "Mr. Herford's will only gave you a right to a home in the house; it did not make you absolute mistress of it. You must not expect that Richard's wife will not be sole mistress here."

"In that case I should go," cried Mrs. Herford, bursting into tears again. "My sons would drive me out of house and home. Oh, Diana! pray that you may have no children to make your old age bitter. You would set your wife over me, Justin!"

"I should certainly make my wife mistress of my home," he replied almost angrily; "but do not let that imaginary grievance vex you now, mother. We can stay no longer, for we must catch the train at

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twelve; but we thought it right to come up to see you before leaving."

"It would have been very odd," she answered, "if my own son was married, and I was the last person to know of it. I wish you joy; and more dutiful children than I have. Richard ran away on the sly; and you are married on the sly! What did I ever do to have such sons? But I forgive you, Justin. May you never experience the bitterness of a lonely old age!"

They left her in tears, after receiving from her a chilly kiss and a sobbing good-by. As they passed along the familiar passages and hall to the door, both looked grave and troubled; but Justin, catching Diana's eye lifted furtively to his face, smiled down on her with a tender though deprecating smile.

"My mother!" he ejaculated, in an apologetic tone.

"And my father!" she said, an answering smile breaking upon her clouded face. "We must bear with them both. We are happy enough to bear with them all, and with one another. We are to bear one another's burdens."

"I will bear yours, now you belong to me," he said fondly, as he wrapped her up carefully from the winter's cold. "Mine at last!" he added. "I'm happy enough now to bear a heavy burden."

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CHAPTER XLI.

REAPING THE HARVEST.

NO one had been more surprised at old Squire Lynn's second marriage than Richard Herford; but it had been also a source of considerable amusement to him. Leah's efforts to be quite a lady continued to afford him constant entertainment; and when the check of Diana's presence was removed, he visited Rillage Grange more frequently. He thought Justin a lucky fellow to have won Diana in spite of his poverty and his downfall in the world; but he had indulged no hope of winning her himself, and there was no insincerity in the hearty though somewhat melancholy congratulations he sent to them. Justin was having the best of it again, he thought to himself. As he crossed to and fro along the cliffs from Herford to Rillage he often stood on the point from which he could see the greater portion of his lands, looking at them with a dissatisfied heart. He knew he was extravagant; but he could not be so reckless as he had been when his sudden spurts of good fortune put him in possession of funds, which

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were as lightly lost as they had been lightly won. To lose now was to lose the property, for which a long line of ancestors had toiled and schemed; and he had natural feeling enough to grudge that loss. He hated to feel that the acres would slip through his fingers as surely as the coins had done before; yet he could not deny himself, or turn his nature into another channel. He must have a merry life at any cost.

In the mean time he tried to gain as much merriment as sufficed for him at Rillage Grange, where Leah always made him welcome. She took good care that her husband should not sink into any excess that might endanger his life and her own position; but she could not find it in her heart to refuse Richard anything she could get for him. Though Diana had shared her little fortune with her father, still allowing him half her yearly income, Leah did not find it any easy task to be the lady of Rillage Grange on two hundred a year. It was not very pleasant to be a lady on means so small, and with all the neighborhood, even her own old friends, turning the cold shoulder upon her. She found herself left very much alone, and she could not help welcoming every visit from the handsome scapegrace whom she had helped back to his estates, and for whom she still felt a lurking fondness. Squire Lynn himself urged him to come often, almost with tears in his eyes.

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Mrs. Herford had suffered many hardships during her life, but she had never suffered one so cruel as to be compelled to invite Leah Dart to Herford Court. Old Martha Dart had been goose-girl, and Leah herself, in her girlhood, had tended the geese upon the cliffs. It was an unheard-of degradation to entertain her as a guest. But Richard was inexorable, and Leah enjoyed nothing so greatly as visiting at Herford Court. There was quite a close relationship between her and Mrs. Herford, since her stepdaughter, Miss Di, had become Mrs. Herford's daughter-in-law; and she never failed to communicate the contents of Diana's letters to her father. She almost drove Mrs. Herford to distraction by speaking of her sons as Justin and Dick; though Richard only laughed good-temperedly when she complained to him about it. It was in vain that Mrs. Herford assumed her most distant and haughty manners; Leah had a native confidence which was quite a match for any fine lady-like airs. She was strong in the consciousness that she was Mrs. Lynn, of Rillage Grange; and if her dress was not so costly or so tasteful as the elder lady's, it was much more gaudy, and, in Leah's own eyes, much grander.

Mrs. Cunliffe, humble as she felt it her duty to be, fully shared Mrs. Herford's indignation and disdain of Mrs. Lynn. She seldom failed to obey any summons from her dear old friend, though Jenny was not permitted by her father to set a foot within the doors

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of Herford Court. Richard respected his clergyman, and avoided him. But he had readily guessed the secret of Jenny's exclusion, if his mother's petulant complaints had not revealed her suspicions of Mrs. Cunliffe's ambitious hopes, and for sheer want of amusement he made the pursuit of little Jenny Cunliffe his favorite pastime. It cost Mr. Cunliffe many a sleepless hour; but never did mother rejoice more in secret over the success of her tactics; while Mrs. Herford was terrified beyond measure at the idea of Richard bringing a wife to Herford Court, and that wife being Jenny Cunliffe.

The new position to which she had climbed was by no means sweet to Leah. The bondage, borne so patiently by Diana, was a very real burden. Now that she was left to the sole companionship and management of her old husband, the confinement became close and the work hard. She had looked on, and thought that Diana had little to do but amuse herself; but she found that she had fulfilled a circle of daily duties which now fell upon her. There were no more long hours in which she could safely leave Squire Lynn under a careful guardianship and walk over to Herford to visit her infirm and grumbling mother or her aunt Fosse. Faithfulness was the groundwork of poor Leah's character; it was natural and instinctive to her. She had satisfied her ambition; but she could not endure the thought of seeming to forsake her friends. Her mother was almost a disgrace to

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her; yet she could not, without much pain, refrain from paying her frequent visits.

She had besides harder work to do—drudging toil and labor which tested her physical strength severely. For Leah was no slattern, and she did not like to see dust gathering upon the furniture, which would be hers at least as long as Squire Lynn lived. The young maid-servant had been dismissed, and Leah had double duty to do. There were nights of wakefulness and watchfulness, and days of toil and care. The whole responsibility of keeping her husband free from excesses, which would have proved fatal to him, fell upon her. She began to lose bulk and color, partly to her alarm and partly to her gratification. The long and narrow old-fashioned mirrors reflected to her scrutinizing eyes a face growing paler and more careworn, and a frame visibly lessening. She fancied that she was getting more like Miss Di, with her clear, colorless complexion, and her air of patrician refinement. But she could not help feeling, in spite of all, that she was paying a higher price than she had reckoned on for the object of her ambition.

At last, one morning in May, she ventured to leave Rillage Grange, to go over to Herford and spend the day with her mother. She had not been able to stay long with her since the day of Diana's marriage, and many a querulous message had reached her. It was by no means a pleasant duty to face the old woman and sit listening to her complaints.

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Now her daughter was a lady she could not understand why she had not money enough to provide lavishly for all her wants and fancies, and Leah had not the heart to tell her that she had scarcely a shilling she could use as she pleased. At last she grew weary of sitting in the dark little cottage, listening to her mother's grumblings, and as the afternoon wore on she announced her intention of going to have tea with her aunt Fosse.

It seemed a strange thing to Leah to walk down the village street again, nodding to one old neighbor after another, who stood and watched her enviously from the cottage doors, but gave her no very cordial greeting. It made her feel somewhat sore at heart, though she tossed her head higher and stepped more mincingly than usual. She was a little worn and downcast this sunny afternoon. Her gay spirits were gone, and her vigorous bodily health was going too. This was to be a lady. She had had her own way, but it did not prove a very smooth or prosperous way. The children rushing noisily out of school and climbing the hedgerows or scampering down to the beach, and the mothers calling to them to come in to tea, struck a deep and melancholy chord within her. There would never more be any life like this for her, full of innocent pleasures and work that was no drudgery, done always for love and not for wages. To keep home for a husband and four children dear to her, to la-

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bor for them because she loved them, would not be her lot. She had had her choice, and had chosen foolishly.

Leah hardly put her vague and forlorn feeling into words, but it was none the less there. Rillage Grange, with its large old empty rooms and its lonely silence, was on her mind as she stepped into her aunt Fosse's spotless and shining kitchen, with its door opening upon the garden and the sunshine glistening on its shelves of crockery and the burnished brass candlesticks on the high mantelpiece. She sank down wearied into the arm-chair on the hearth, with its well-stuffed cushions, soft with the feathers of her aunt's famous poultry, and covered with many-colored patchwork, put together by her aunt's fingers. This was a very palace of homely comfort, and one like it had always been within Leah's reach. Mrs. Fosse busied herself in getting tea, and whilst Leah looked on with her black eyes glittering through tears, she made ready the little round table and watched the kettle for the first symptoms of boiling, to secure the earliest bubbling of the water to make her old man's tea, and to prevent any drops splashing her clean hearth. Leah breathed a heavy and very bitter sigh.

"Look out and see if uncle's comin', my dear," said Mrs. Fosse, hearing the sigh, but passing it over as not to be talked about; "and give him a call if you see him."

Leah stood for a few moments on the door-sill,

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shading her eyes with her hand, and looking out on a scene as old as her earliest childhood to her. There was nothing new in the little garden, or the green meadow beyond, or the peep of the sea in a fork of the cliffs. The cluck of the hens calling their chickens, and the blissful grunting of the pig basking in the sunshine, were as old to her. But she had never stood at the cottage door, with tear-dimmed eyes and a failing heart, as now. Why had she not been content with the chance of such a home as this? She might have married some one who had loved her, and who would have grown old with her, as her uncle and aunt had done. But she belonged neither to her own folks nor to gentlefolks, as it was; and no husband or child would go on into old age with her and brighten up those chilly days. It was a terrible mistake that she had made.

Mrs. Fosse was inclined to make more of Leah, seeing her in such low spirits. She broiled some rashers of the bacon Mrs. Cunliffe coveted, and poached some of her famous eggs for tea. How delicious the food tasted to Leah in the pleasant cottage-kitchen, with the kettle singing a tune upon the hob, and the spring breezes blowing in through the open door, salt and fresh from the sea! Squire Lynn was particular about his meals, and she was obliged to prepare richer and less simple food at Rillage Grange for him, and they were eaten in larger rooms; but then she felt compelled to sit up straight and

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stiff, and take care lest she brought down some cutting reproof from her husband, who had been accustomed to see Diana at the head of his table. Oh, how foolish she had been!

"Master Dick came back from London last night," remarked Old Fosse, as they sat at tea. "He's been seein' Master Justin, thank the Lord! There shouldn't be no enmity betwixt them, for they're all but brothers. He says our Miss Pansy's as white as a lily, and her little hands are like egg-shells. She's pinin' away, he's afraid, and she won't hear of comin' back to Herford."

"Oh, Jeremy!" cried his wife; "can't nothin' be done? Miss Pansy's like our own child, poor little motherless blossom! It'll be a sore grief to every one of us if anything mischances Miss Pansy. It's likely she'll pine, leavin' Herford for London, where there's no good air, no good victuals, nor good milk and eggs. Couldn't she come home again?"

"Master Dick's been talkin' to me," replied old Fosse. "He's not all bad, is Master Dick, and maybe he'll turn to the Lord some day. He says he'll go clear away for the summer, and leave Herford Court for Master Justin, if he'll come to it for three or four months. It 'ud be like old times again."

"It can't ever be like old times again," said Mrs. Fosse, sadly.

"Did he say anythin' about my daughter—Miss Di?" inquired Leah. It was one of the sweets of

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her elevation to dwell upon the close connection she had with Diana, who was always kind to her, and treated her as her father's wife.

"Of course he'd see Mrs. Justin Herford," said her aunt, severely; "but I never heard of any daughter of yours, Leah. To marry a drunken old noodle does not make you the mother of a lady like Miss Di, Leah Dart."

"Come, come," interposed old Fosse, rising from the tea-table, "let bygones be bygones. Leah can't unwed herself, if she wished it ever so. We must reap as we sow, but don't let us hurry on the harvest. Leah, you come along wi' me to the Lantern-hill."

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CHAPTER XLII.

WHO'S AT THE HELM?

OLD FOSSE had seen the tears in Leah's eyes and the wanness of her face, and his warm heart ached for her. This was the time, he thought, when perhaps a word in season might win her from foolishness to wisdom. It was yet a long way off sunset, for May days are in no hurry to close, even when the winds are bitter enough to make one long for the cosy warmth of wintry firesides. The shadows were growing deeper on the eastern clefts and ravines of the cliffs, but the sunny surfaces fronting westward were thrown into higher relief by them. The coast, wherever it caught the light, was bathed in splendor, and the yellow gorse in bloom upon them shone like gold. There had been a fresh north-westerly breeze blowing over the sea for some hours, and during the heat of the day it had been warm and welcome. The whole field of sea, stretching far away to a distant line, was flecked with silvery cat's-paws, threatening by-and-by to break into waves; and the foam was leaping in snowy flakes up the

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sides of the swarthy rocks. Low down on the horizon lay a long line of gray clouds, broken and tumbled together, with cross-bars of a dull leaden hue intersecting them. It was not yet cold, but there was a chilliness creeping landwards from the sea which foretold a coming storm.

Old Fosse and Leah pursued their way to the lighthouse in silence, and were still silent when they gained the little platform of rock beneath its walls, from which they could see a long line of coast, ending on each side with a headland stretching into the sea, and there joining the long line of clouds which lay almost like mimic cliffs beyond the dim blue of the water. Cliff and sea and sky were all that could be seen.

"Ah! there's sorrow on the sea, and it cannot be quiet," said Old Fosse; "but it seems as if I loved it all the more, and thought of it all the more, for the sorrow. It 'ud seem strange if it was always at rest and quiet; it wouldn't be like this world, Leah. Maybe the Lord loves us the more for the sorrow we have, that cannot let us be quiet, 'specially you young things, as haven't learned to find rest in Him."

"Uncle Fosse," sobbed Leah, "I've been pretty nigh wishin' all day as I'd never wed Squire Lynn. It's all turned out pride and vexation," she added, after a mournful pause; "but if I repented ever so, it couldn't ever be different; I couldn't unwed myself. I should have to keep on bein' his wife, and never

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have a good man like you for my master, to love me and work for me, as you do for aunt. It's poor consolation to call Miss Di my daughter and make believe I'm a lady, when I'm harder worked than I ever was. I'm like a dog at a fair, dressed up in a scarlet coat and a hat, and walking on two legs. Nobody thinks he isn't a dog. Master Dick laughs and makes game of me, and Mrs. Herford never speaks a word to me if she can help it, when I go to dinner there. But if I repented, what 'ud be the good? It 'ud be all the same; and I'm a miserable woman."

"No, no, Leah, my lass," said the old man tenderly; "it all depends upon whether you are sorry of your sin or your punishment! If you repent of your pride and folly, God can take those away and make you wise and humble. And your punishment wouldn't be all the same if you could believe God was watchin' over you, and carin' for you, and lovin' you with all His heart. For it's with all His heart God loves us. He doesn't say to us, 'Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart,' and then only give us a bit of His own love. No, no, Leah. All His might, all His strength, all His heart—that's how Jesus loved His disciples; and that's how He loves us still. You didn't know what you might have been, when you wished to be a lady. Why! you might have been one of the daughters of the Lord God Almighty! What is a lady to that? Miss Di herself thinks nothin' of bein' a lady, because she

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knows she is one of God's children. And so may I, and so may you, my lass! There's neither high nor low, rich nor poor, in His sight. He couldn't love the Queen herself more than with all His heart."

Leah could not answer. She knew that her uncle Fosse had talked like this before, but it seemed as if she had been deaf, and could not hear his words. But she heard them now; and oh! could she believe them? would God forgive all her folly and pride?

She looked tearfully across the tossing sea, towards the cliffs under which lay her new home, where life was so difficult. The little cove at Rillage, for it was hardly a bay, was not in sight, but round the rock which hid it she saw a boat coming—the Herford boat, once Justin's, now Richard's. Richard had rigged it with a saffron-colored sail, distinct from every other sail along that coast. In the westering light it looked like a gorgeous butterfly flitting over the soft dim blue of the sea, and catching the sunshine on its flame-colored wings. She watched it listlessly for a few minutes, sobbing now and then like a chidden child. Then her thoughts began to stir. Richard had visited Rillage Grange whilst she had been away; and there would be no one at hand to check either him or her husband, who was likely enough to avail himself of his unwonted freedom. It was the first holiday she had taken since her marriage, and what if it ended badly! She had married Squire Lynn with her eyes open, knowing him to be a drunk-

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ard and irreclaimable. There was no hope of his growing any more temperate, or of keeping from fatal excesses, unless he was closely watched, as Miss Di had watched him. Well! if God would only forgive her, she would bear with him, and have patience with him; and do her utmost to be a good wife to him.

"Uncle Fosse," she said sorrowfully, "I must be goin' home now."

Yet she did not turn away at once, but followed the flutterings of the saffron sail for a minute or two. The tide was in Richard's favor, though the wind was against him; but the little boat was performing some unaccountable manœuvres. It was hovering dangerously near a long line of reef, which was covered at high tide, but which was beginning to show its black and pointed crest through the surf that danced and wavered along it. Near to it the rocks were worn into deep, parallel furrows, over which the sea swirled to and fro, as it rose and fell, and bounded at last tumultuously against the foot of the high precipice, upon the brow of which lay the little path to Rillage. There was a strong eddy just there at any time, but at this time, with the tide flowing and the wind pressing heavily upon the water, it was more than usually dangerous. Yet apparently Richard Herford had loosed the sail; and the little boat was reeling and staggering in the current, with the sail almost dipping into the water.

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"I can't think what Master Dick can be about," said Leah in an anxious tone; "see how his boat's bobbin' up and down. Who can be steerin', uncle?"

"He'd little Johnny Tucker wi' him," answered old Fosse, "when he set out. Johnny's a good steersman, lad as he is; but I'll run in and fetch my glass. It's just inside the porch here."

Leah could not take her eyes off the boat, whilst old Fosse was searching for it with his telescope among the rocks. At last he fixed it within the range of his glass; and he cried out in a voice of alarm,

"Why! it's old Squire Lynn at the rudder," he exclaimed, "and Master Dick's tryin' to get it out of his hand. Johnny isn't there. They'll be borne on to the rocks. Good Lord! good Lord!"

The last words were spoken in a tone of entreaty, as if he saw one who could help, and was crying to him to stretch out his hand.

"They're fightin'!" he cried, "fightin' for the rudder! They don't see where they are goin'. Are they mad, Leah, or drunk?"

Leah lifted up her voice and uttered a long, shrill, piercing cry of warning; but the wind bore the sound inland, against the cliffs. Yet almost as if in answer to it a loud call for help reached their ears. The sail, all aflame with the evening sunshine, and swelling with the western wind, was drifting down fast into the furrows and deep hollows of the rocks.

"Quick! quick!" cried old Fosse; "there's my

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boat down below. I've a strong arm yet, and so have you, Leah. There's not a moment to lose."

The fishing-boat was moored at the foot of a rude staircase cut in the rock; and it was not a minute's work to seize the oars and push out through the tangle of wrack into clearer water. Leah had not spoken since she had uttered her wild, ineffectual scream, and she did not speak now. All her strength was needed for her oar; though the languor and weakness she had felt all day seemed replaced by a marvellous vigor. The salt spray sprinkled her face, as it had done thousands of times, but it brought no color back to its deadly pallor. She had her back to the point whither they were rowing; but from time to time she glanced round and searched the waters for the glowing and fluttering sail. As long as it was in sight there was hope that all would be right; but how slowly was their clumsy fishing-boat making its way against the tide! How long it was before they could get away from the current which flowed round the Lantern-hill! Leah heard old Fosse murmuring a prayer, but her throat was too dry to say, "Amen."

He was sitting on the bench before her, and she saw his face as he turned round to look towards the boat. An expression of terror was stamped upon it. He turned back, and bent himself with desperate effort to his oar; and Leah did the same. Were they to be too late?

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"Lord! have mercy on their souls!" she heard him say in an awe-struck undertone.

It seemed to Leah as if these muttered words compelled her to look round, though she must lose a stroke of her oar. There rose up in terrible array the steep, inaccessible cliffs, all bathed in light, with little birds flitting about the golden gorse and the glossy ivy that grew in every crevice. The sky was smiling overhead with a deeper blue than it had ever worn since the winter's grayness. All along the summit of the cliffs rang the songs of the thrushes, and the clear whistle of the blackbird, and the busy twitter of the finches; not silent for an instant, though human voices were being hushed in death. She could hear the cattle being called, and the tinkle of sheep-bells in the meadows above her. But she heard and saw as one who hears and sees not. Only one sight was clear to her: the amber sail drifting on the tossing waves, and the boat breaking to pieces on the sharp point of the rock that had pierced it through.

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CHAPTER XLIII.

FACING DEATH.

OLD FOSSE and Leah rowed on in unbroken silence. The measured splash of their oars was the only sound that Leah heard, though her ear was strained to catch the sound of voices calling for help. No call came across the water, though they were near enough to hear it, if there had been any. The boat was held fast by the tooth of rock, and it was probable that one or both of the men in it was clinging to it for safety: though the white foam was tossing over it, as if in triumphant delight over a new toy. The silence was an ominous answer to this hope; and as they came near enough they saw that it was empty.

Leah stood up on the bench, and looked around. Beyond the reef, closer under the cliffs, was a channel, comparatively smooth, and beyond that a strip of sand, lying below the overhanging cliff. The slanting light of the sun fell brightly on the yellow sand, and she could see, flung upon it like a weed, the body of Richard Herford—she was near enough to

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know that it was Richard. A few minutes brought the boat through the straight, smooth channel to the sand; and she sprang out of it and ran eagerly to his side. A low moan, as she tried to move him, made her start again to her feet.

"He's not dead!" she shouted to her uncle, as he fastened his boat; "it's Master Dick, and he's not dead."

She shaded her eyes with her hands to look out steadily over the glistening sea; but there was no other form to be seen. If her husband had indeed been in the boat, he was lost. But Fosse was beside her now, and bending over Richard Herford; and she had not time yet to think of the old man, whose wife she had been. Fosse knelt down, and placed his arm under Richard to raise him a little; but the sharp agony he seemed to suffer made him desist. This was not the unconsciousness merely of a half-drowned man. Some deeper injury had befallen him.

"We must move him higher," said he, "as high as we can. It's nigh on four hours to high tide. We can't carry him to th' boat; and th' boat can't come nigher. We must lift him higher on th' sands, Leah; it's as much as we can do, that is."

It taxed their strength to the utmost; for Leah was exhausted, and old Fosse was unused to lifting heavy burdens. Richard was utterly helpless and unconscious, though now and then he groaned as

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they moved him by degrees into a spot of greater safety. Then they stood and looked at one another in questioning bewilderment. What were they to do now?

"Leah, my lass!" said old Fosse, "couldst thee trust in God enough to bide here wi' him, whilst I run back and fetch th' men-folk? There's time and to spare; plenty o' time. But it 'll be fearsome, if thee canst na' trust in God. Or wilt thee come wi' me, and leave him? Maybe that 'ud be a wiser thing to do; only it 'ud be a fearsome thing for him to wake up and find himself alone. He'd know nothin' of any one havin' gone for help."

"I'll stay. I can't quit him," answered Leah, briefly. She helped her uncle to push off his boat, and watched it floating away from her down the channel; but before it was out of sight, or beyond the reach of her voice, she roused herself.

"Bid them get a bed ready for Master Dick," she shouted, "and send for Dr. Vye. Rillage is nigher Lowborough than Herford. Go to Rillage," she called, till the cliffs rang with her voice.

"Ay! ay!" cried old Fosse in reply.

Slowly she retraced her steps to Richard's side, and stood looking down upon his deathlike face. Then she stooped and covered it with her handkerchief, partly to hide it from herself and partly to screen it from the light of the setting sun, which shone brilliantly into the low arch of the rock in which they

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had laid him. Leah had seen a picture of a sepulchre in eastern lands; and this arch looked to her like a grave, with Richard lying corpse-like in it. She shivered as she thought of it, in spite of the warm sunlight. It was warm still, for the rock reflected the heat; and the sand was hot and dry. The flies were buzzing about, and the bees were humming just above the low-roofed arch. She sat down on the sand, and laid her fingers on Richard's wrist, where the pulse was throbbing fitfully. He was certainly alive; not dead.

Then her thoughts went away to her husband; the old man she had left only a few hours ago in his usual health. He had bid her good-by in a jeering, mocking tone, his only weapon against her and her authority; and she had flung away out of the room, too angry to answer him. And she was never to hear his voice again. She would no longer be Mrs. Lynn of Rillage Grange. The heir would come and turn her out; and there was not a shilling that would come to her. This thought came dully to her mind; but it was there, as it had been all day. Her marriage had been a blunder; she had given too much for her own way.

It was not that she did not feel grieved for his death; rather she was stunned by it, and the thoughts that came to her mind were in a tangled medley. She got up after a while, and left the little cave, rambling aimlessly to and fro among the rocks which

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bounded the narrow strip of sand. The sun had dipped below the sea, though she could still see its red light creeping slowly up the cliffs and fading into the gray twilight. The sea, too, was creeping in, no longer blue, but a pale, cold gray. As soon as the sun was gone the air grew chilly; and the foam playing on the reef looked like snow. Suppose her uncle had been dashed against the rocks, as the other boat had been! It seemed hours since he left her. In another hour or two the tide must fill this little bay, and the tomb-like arch at the back of it, from end to end. She had climbed round the rocks that hemmed it in, and passed under a little portal worn through them into a second bay beyond, no safer than the one she had left, where Richard was lying helpless. But her keen eyes had discovered a natural pathway up the cliffs, made by the action of the water, steep and perilous, but possible to scale above the highest tide-mark. There she would be safe till help could come; for surely in the morning she would be able to make herself heard by some passing boat. She clambered up it hurriedly, and looked about her in the gathering dusk. There was not a speck to be seen upon the sea. If her uncle had been coming from Rillage, she must have seen his boat. Some accident had befallen him.

But if she stayed there, in safety, there would be no hope for Richard Herford. She had deserted him, and he was left to perish by the incoming tide. The

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only chance for him would be that she should be at her post, ready to direct her uncle by her shouts if he should ever come back with succor, to the spot where he had left them. It would soon be hidden by the darkness from any possibility of being seen from the sea. A choice lay before her. Safety for herself, and death for him; or a chance of safety for him, with the alternative of certain death for them both. Must she go back to peril for his sake?

Life was dear to her, and death was terrible. Superstitious terror alone encircled the thought of death. Yet the very faithfulness within her forbade her to yield to superstitious terror. She could not leave Richard, lying unconscious and alone in his living tomb; to wake up, perhaps, at the cold touch of the sea as it crawled around him. The water was already ankle-deep in the portal lying between her and the spot she must return to, and she shuddered as her feet splashed through it; but she went on, leaving hope and life behind her.

When she reached the niche, now so dark she could scarcely see it, she was yet aware that Richard had stirred while she had been away. She knelt down beside him, and laid her hands on his head, and he moved again, almost imperceptibly; but she felt it, and a gleam of comfort came to her. She spoke to him in a clear, penetrating voice, which reached his brain.

"It's me—Leah," she said.

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"Don't leave me," he whispered.

"No, never, never!" she cried, bursting into sobs and tears.

She took her seat on the sand again beside him, and buried her face in her hands. She sat still so long, that when at last she lifted up her head, the night was drawing on swiftly, and the stars were twinkling in the sky. In the west there was a tender, green light lingering still above the sunset, clear and soft; and against it stood out the sharp, black outlines of the lighthouse and the rock on which it stood. There was no light shining in the old square belfry; no light at all. Leah had never seen it dark at night before; and the sight filled her heart with greater dismay. The sky was dark, but the sea was darker still; and the cliffs could no longer be distinguished from their shadows, except where their points touched the sky. The long, floating seaweed, which had been drying on the rocks an hour before, stretched in black lines upon the approaching water; lines which moved to and fro, and filled her with terror lest the sea was bringing to her the lifeless body of her husband. Richard Herford neither spoke nor groaned; and there was now no sound save the multitudinous voices of the great deep. She could hear its creeping eddies whispering and rustling and moaning close beside her, whilst all along the coast the full tide was thundering, wherever it had gained the foot of the cliffs. Even the soft swirl with which it

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washed gently among the pebbles, lying on the margin of the sand, smote upon her ear. There was no longer any token of familiar human life. She felt as if she was already in a strange and dreary world.

"Oh, God!" she cried, stretching out her hands towards the sea, as though He was beyond it, "send somebody to save us. I was tryin' to save my husband and Master Dick from drownin'. Oh! save us from drownin'!" She had scarcely spoken when a faint light was to be seen in the lighthouse tower. Some one was kindling the lantern there, and the familiar beacon brought comfort to her. It was too far away for any sound of her voice to reach it; but in some way her heart grew lighter as she watched it. She did not feel so desolate and forsaken as she had done before; she was still near Rillage and Herford, and God could send them help. But if it did not come soon, if it did not come in a few minutes, it might prove too late for Richard Herford. His pulse was growing feebler, and his body more chilled by the night air. She could do nothing for him, but watch for help and share his fate, whatever that might be.

Presently she detected a light dancing up and down among the waves; and she called—a loud, piercing cry, that rose above the tumult of the waves. The light changed its course, coming more directly towards her; and in a minute or two she heard a shout. The boat had to approach cautiously through the

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darkness; but before long she could hear the oars in the water, and by-and-by old Fosse's voice,

"All th' men-folk were away at the sheep-washin'," he shouted; "they'd gone up to supper at Farmer Popham's, and there were none but women and children about. I had to go after them myself. But we've got a mattress for Master Dick; and Dr. Vye 'll be at Rillage afore we can get there."

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CHAPTER XLIV.

CRIPPLED FOR LIFE.

TWO days and nights passed by before Richard Herford regained his full consciousness; though at times he felt a dull sensation of being subject to much keen suffering and of seeing dark figures and hearing muffled voices about him, which he vainly tried to bring into more distinct perception to himself. He knew nothing of the lapse of time. There was neither memory nor foresight stirring in his brain. A dark gulf of two lost days, like broken links out of a chain, separated his past life from the future.

When he came to himself he lay for a while perfectly still, making no effort to move. There was profound silence around him, and the room was lighted by a lamp which he could not see. It seemed only an hour or two, and surely he had fallen asleep somehow during the interval since he had been drinking with old Squire Lynn, and laughing over the trick they had played upon Leah, when they had together forced the rusty lock of the old wine-cellar, the key of which she had carried away in her pocket.

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They had been as merry over it as though they were boys. But Richard's mind was awake, and had awakened from its long stupor with fully its natural vigor. How was it then that he had so clear an impression of inviting old Squire Lynn to go back with him to Herford, and fetch Leah home? He could recollect distinctly how he and the white-headed, stooping old man had gone down to the beach and set sail, Squire Lynn taking the helm. He could actually see him again seated in the stern of the boat, and hear him swearing at the chilly wind. How was it then that he came to be lying in Squire Lynn's bed? This was his bedroom; he knew it well enough to recognize the place he was in.

He could only answer the question by coming to the conclusion that he had drunk more of the old wine they had found in the cellar than he had intended; and that he had never left Rillage Grange at all. He was vexed with himself; more vexed than usual, for he knew he might have done Squire Lynn a mischief; possibly have led him into a dangerous excess, in Leah's absence. He had been lying quite still until this moment, but now he wished to draw the curtain which screened the head of the bed. But how was this? His muscles no longer instinctively obeyed his will. He could move his arms and turn his head from side to side on his pillow; but no other movement seemed possible to him. He made a second effort, and a third, bringing into play all the force of his will,

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and all the nervous power he possessed; but he could not stir himself. He lay like a log. There was no longer the usual correspondence between his will and the heavy framework of bone and flesh which formed its prison.

He could not understand it, or believe it. He was suffering, he thought, from a nightmare, of which the spasms of pain, he had vaguely felt, were a part. If he waited a short time he would regain his wonted mastery of his own limbs. It was almost laughable to find himself so impotent. He lay quiet, picturing to himself the freshness of the air on the cliffs, and how pleasant a walk homeward would be under the starry sky, if he could only get out of the house without rousing any one. It was a queer thing to put him into Squire Lynn's own room. After all, it would be best to turn over a new leaf, and give up these dangerous indulgences. He knew what he would do—get the bishop to find another living for Cunliffe, and persuade Justin to come back to Herford Vicarage. If Justin and Diana were living near to him, by George! he could, and he would, keep himself straight. Richard could use stronger oaths than "By George!" but he rarely did so in the presence of women; and he felt a restraint, something like that of a woman's presence, at this moment.

The nightmare must be over, or he could not reason so clearly. Who ever heard of a man forming schemes of reformation like these, when under the

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effects of a nightmare? He would get up now. But though the veins in his temples grew swollen, and drops of perspiration started to his forehead, with the vehement efforts and the secret dread that was stealing over him, he could not bestir himself and rise from the bed. What was the matter with him? He groaned aloud, as he asked himself this question.

In an instant he heard a footstep cross the room, and Leah looked down on him nervously. She was dressed like a nurse, in a simple cotton gown, and her hair was tucked away under a white cap. Her face was pale and full of care and sorrow. She looked very unlike the Leah he was used to see.

"Am I ill?" he asked, in sudden terror. She nodded silently; and he could see the tears glistening in her eyes.

"What is the matter?" he inquired; "I feel as heavy as a log; I cannot move myself. What on earth ails me?"

"You've had an accident, and are hurt," answered Leah; "you musn't try to move yourself."

"An accident!" he repeated; "hurt!"

Then with a vivid flash of memory there came back to his brain the terrible moment when he was struggling with the drunken old man at the helm, whilst the jagged reef of rock was lying right across their track, and the breeze was blowing his little boat upon it. He could hear again the sharp ripping of the planks as the boat struck on a point, and the

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splitting of the slender mast; and he felt himself struggling in the sea. That was the last thing he could remember; but he was on the sea then, and it was evening. What was the time now? and how was it he found himself safe, and in Squire Lynn's bed?

"Leah," he said, in an awe-stricken tone, "where is your husband?"

"Never mind now," she answered sadly.

"He was lost!" he exclaimed; "he was quite beside himself. I know he was lost."

The tears fell fast from Leah's eyes, and she turned from the bedside to wipe them away, out of Richard's sight. Her husband was in every sense lost; even the poor drowned body had not been recovered, to be buried among his ancestors.

"Leah!" Richard called again.

"I'm here," she answered.

"When did it happen?" he asked.

"That was Tuesday evening," she said, "and we're in the middle of Thursday night. I'm sittin' up with you, and Uncle Fosse is in the next room."

"Does Justin know, and Diana?" he inquired.

"Master Justin sat up with you all last night," she replied, "and Dr. Vye, and a doctor from London. The London doctor couldn't stay any longer, and he said it was no use him stayin'."

"Am I much hurt?" asked Richard with intense anxiety. "Tell me the truth, Leah. I must know the truth. What is it makes me feel as if I could not

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move a limb? I might be made of stone. Is it a very bad accident?"

Leah had come back again, and was looking down on him, with a strange look of deep, unutterable pity in her black eyes. Her lips trembled as she spoke, and her voice faltered.

"Master Dick," she said, "wait till Master Justin's here to tell you. He's gone back to London to tell Miss Di; nobody else could tell her how her poor father died. Try to think of God, and go to sleep."

"Think of God?" he repeated. "Do you think that would help me to sleep? There's no sleep in me now. Who could go to sleep if they were like me, and could not move a limb? Tell me all about it, Leah."

"I couldn't," she sobbed; "my husband was drowned, and lost altogether; and I can never, never speak kind to him again, nor him to me. I wish I'd only known! Wait till Master Justin comes back to-morrow."

"I cannot wait," he cried in an agony; "go and send old Fosse to me."

Fosse came, and stood beside him as Leah had done, looking down on him with the same expression of deep pity, whilst Richard's eager, questioning eyes scanned his face. He did not ask old Fosse to tell him the truth; the truth would come from his lips, whether he wished to hearken to it or no. He could not run away from it now, as he had done in old times.

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"What is it, Fosse?" he asked.

"Must I tell you all, Master Richard?" he said.

"Yes!" he answered, though the word was formed by his parched lips rather than uttered by his voice. He held out his hand, and the old fisherman clasped it between both his own, and fell down on his knees beside the bed.

"Oh! dear Lord, dear Lord!" he cried, "I know thou loves us every one, as if we were little young children playin' around thy footstool. It is thy footstool, Lord. All this green earth and fields and woods; ay! and the troubled sea. All about thy footstool we're sufferin', and toilin', and lovin', and livin' and dyin'; and thou sees us, and loves us all. The mother watches her little babes playin' at her feet, and wilt thou not see us, dear Lord? Ay! and if the children fret, and quarrel, and hurt each other, the mother does not drive 'em away wi' anger from their safe hidin'-place at her feet. And wilt thou drive thy sinful children away from thee? We are far from thinkin' that of thee, dear Lord.

"And now we lift up our eyes to thy face, and we call to thee. We know thou knows what to do. There's one has died on thy footstool, drowned in th' sea; and one that's stricken down in his full strength and youth; but spared to live a while longer. Oh! help him to put his trust in thee! Thou art always good and lovin' and wise; and thy ways are higher than our ways. Oh! give us strength; give us pa-

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tience; give us faith in thee. We seem to feel thee very near to us, Lord. We have only to wait a little while, and thou'lt lift us up from thy feet into thy bosom."

Old Fosse's voice ceased, but Richard did not open his eyes. He was passing through an agony of dread. There was a terrible solemnity to him in the old man's prayer, in its simple words, and its broken accents.

"Tell me all," he murmured at last; "what is it?"

"The doctors say you'll never be able to get about again," he answered pitifully; "it's the back that's hurt. Your head's all right, and your mind clear; but you'll be a cripple for life. We found you lyin' near the rock the sea had tossed you on, after you had nearly swum ashore. But you're not goin' to die, thank God! you'll live many a year yet. You'd have died for certain if Leah and me hadn't been sent to save you. Squire Lynn was gone in an instant of time. There's been depths of mercy shown to you, Master Richard."

"To be a cripple for life!" he moaned, turning his face to the wall, and feeling, in the act of movement, how utterly helpless he lay. It seemed to him as if it would have been better to have been killed outright. He was a burden to himself. To have no power over his own limbs; to be bedridden; to be nothing but a living log, whilst the world was going on with all its interests and pleasures, and he taking

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no part in them, though he was still in the world. Would it not have been better to have stepped over the boundary at once, and seen what lies on the other side of the great mystery of death?

But the choice was not given to him, whether he would die or live. We may long for death, and rejoice exceedingly when we can find the grave; but still life may be given to us, and the sun rise, and the darkness come for us, swinging us from day to night, and from night to day, in spite of all the bitterness of soul and anguish of body which make the burden of living all but unbearable. Richard Herford lived to feel this. His merry life was over, but it was not to be a short one. Even while he loathed it, he could not but care for it, and obey the rules by which it could be prolonged. He was compelled to cherish his miserable existence more carefully than he had done, whilst it was still full of vigor and the power of enjoyment. Henceforth his chief work in the world would be simply to keep himself alive.

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CHAPTER XLV.

VILLAGE TALK.

JUSTIN and Diana had found their happiness weighted with an unexpected burden. They were very happy; happier than they had either of them ever been. The life they led was very different from life at Herford or Rillage Grange. They were brought into contact with many minds and many interests; and they thoroughly entered into the new intellectual current which was flowing around them. To Diana it was perfectly new. Her life-long seclusion at Rillage gave a charm to all the varied incidents which every day brought to her. The companionship existing between herself and her husband was even more complete than she had anticipated in her brightest day-dreams. He seemed to understand her thoughts and desires without words.

It was Pansy who was tasting the bitterness of real loneliness; she, who had never known what it was to be alone. Until a few months ago there had not been a thought in her simple heart which she could not have told to her father; but now an absolute

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dullness had come over her. She could not tell him how desolate she felt. She had so long believed herself to be first in her father's heart, that it was a profound though wordless grief to her to find Diana there, in the place she had considered her own. It was no wonder, she thought, that he should prefer Diana to her; for Diana was full of life, and animation, and a beautiful happiness, which embellished everything she said and did. Pansy looked on with a sore and sorrowful heart. It was Diana now who was her father's companion; not the little daughter, whose house had been built on sand, and had been swept down in the great storm that had beaten against it.

This was the cloud over Justin's happiness; at first scarcely more than the thin fine mist which scarcely dims the sunshine, and which is most clearly recognized when it has passed away, and the true brightness shines. He would not own to himself that Pansy's presence was a restraint, yet when Diana and he were alone together, he felt a freedom that was wanting while her sad young face was beside them. How to bring the smiles back to that face grew a serious problem to both Diana and himself.

This spring was a very different season from the last to all of them. Justin was fully as much occupied with public meetings; for he was a good speaker, apart from any consideration of position or influence, and his services were requested by several committees

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in their arrangements for their respective meetings. But he found himself a person of much less social importance, as the secretary of a small charity, than he had been as the possible candidate for parliamentary membership. As to Pansy, the season was a miserable counterfeit of the last. She heard of the same things, read of them in the newspapers, was near enough to catch the echo of them, and that was all her share. No one mentioned the Fortescues in her hearing—those summer friends of hers, who had won her girlish heart and tossed it away as a worthless bauble. It was the bitterness of this which crushed Pansy's spirit. She envied Jenny Cunliffe, who had always envied her. Why had not her father been content to remain the humble vicar of Herford, when she would have grown up as his daughter unnoticed and uncourted?

Sometimes Diana fancied she heard in the still hours of the night moans and sobs reaching her through the thin walls of their cottage. But when she stole into Pansy's room with her softest footstep, she would find her sleeping apparently, with the quiet, regular breathing of girlhood. Pansy smothered her crying, half-ashamed and half-frightened. What could she tell Diana? How could she find words to express the morbid sorrows that were poisoning the sources of life? Diana would reason with her, and talk to her of submitting to God, of trusting to His love. As yet Pansy could do neither.

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It was just such an evening in May, as the one when Pansy and Justin had driven homewards the year before, through the cool and quiet lanes lying between Lowborough and Herford. All the village was astir. By this time every person in it knew that the great London doctor, as well as Dr. Vye, had pronounced solemnly that there was no hope of Master Richard ever getting about again. The place had been in a tumult of agitation, almost as great as if every household shared personally in the calamity that had happened. This evening they were scattered in groups of three and four all along the valley, upon the road which Richard had tramped down, footsore and weary, but in vigorous health and strength, only a year ago. Leah and his mother were watching and weeping beside him now at Rillage Grange. It was known that Justin was coming back with his wife and Miss Pansy, and all the villagers had turned out to catch a glance at them, though it was felt to be inopportune to give them any other welcome. All the Lynns who were in England were also coming, to stay at Herford Court while their affairs were settled, for Richard could neither be moved from Rillage Grange nor bear the noise of a number of visitors there.

"Please God," said old Fosse, "we shall have Master Justin and Miss Pansy back among us for good. Herford's never like itself with them away."

"But Master Dick's the master still," objected one

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of his hearers; "Master Justin 'ud be nought but a bailiff."

"Master or bailiff," answered old Fosse, "Herford 'ud be a different place wi' Master Justin in it."

"Th' old Squire has well nigh ruined Rillage," said Dan Popham, from the home farm at Rillage; "they say Captain Lynn 'll find himself up to th' neck in mortgages. He'd no share in his mother's fortune, bein' his father's heir, and he can't afford to live at the place now it's come to him. It's many a year since any one of us has clapped eyes on any o' th' Lynns, except Miss Di. What 'll they do with th' Grange, thinks-ta?"

"It 'll be many a long week ere Master Dick can be moved, if all's true," said another.

"What 'll Leah Dart do now?" asked a third; "she's not been a fine lady for long. Folks say there won't be a brass farthin' for her when all's over, not a farthin'. She'll be sorry she turned up her nose at thee, Dan Popham."

"I'd marry Leah Dart any day she'd have me," said Dan; "she's a brave lass."

"Leah's made up her mind to stay wi' Master Dick, as long as he needs her," answered old Fosse; "she's saved his life, and now she'll take care of it, and she's a rare good nurse. Master Dick 'll have every comfort nursin' can give him. And Leah has repented herself sore for all her folly and sin, and please God! she'll make a good woman yet."

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"If Master Justin comes back for good," said the woman who had spoken of Leah, "which 'll be mistress at Herford Court, the old madam or the new one?"

That was a question none of them could answer. It was well known that Mrs. Herford set great store on her position as mistress of Herford, and had frequently declared that no new mistress could or should depose her.

"Mrs. Cunliffe 'll miss gettin' her own way this time," remarked the same woman, who was notorious as a gossip in Herford; "there's no chance of Master Dick ever getting married now, so Miss Jenny is safe. I thought as all Mrs. Cunliffe's eggs 'ud never get hatched, she'll have to put up wi' a few addled ones."

There was a general titter, understood by all but old Fosse himself, who was the only person in Herford that did not know the history of Mrs. Cunliffe's chickens.

"Hush! hush! hush!" he said, in a kindly tone; "we must all put up wi' addled eggs. Let's take care we don't hatch cockatrice eggs. There's a many sins have got a smooth white shell outside 'em, but when they're hatched they sting. I don't know what eggs Mrs. Cunliffe has to do with; but poor Leah has hatched hers, and a pretty brood o' sorrows are come of it. And we're all the same, all the same; silly creatures that don't know what they're wishin' for."

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"Here they come!" shouted Dan Popham.

Two carriages were coming down the valley, and the villagers stood aside under the hedgerows, the men taking off their caps, and the women curtseying in silence as they passed. There was a gravity and a sadness about this return that struck painfully upon Pansy, who was looking eagerly from side to side at the old familiar faces. When the carriages were out of sight the people dispersed slowly to their own homes.

"Didst-ta see Miss Pansy?" they asked one another; "she looks like as if she was struck for death! It was like a funeral, their comin' back."

"God forbid!" said Mrs. Fosse and the other mothers in the village.

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CHAPTER XLVI.

WILLING SERVICE.

THE Lynn family had met under somewhat strange circumstances. Their father's death had brought them together, yet there were no funeral rites to be attended. It would have been a relief to go through the ordinary ceremonies which follow death. For a day or two, until some idea had been gained as to the state of old Squire Lynn's affairs, the sons passed away their time in rambling over the neglected estate and the badly cultivated fields of the home-farms, whilst Diana and one of her eldest sisters, the only daughters living in England, were occupied in providing their mourning dresses. Diana alone mourned over her father, to whom she had given the best of her life, and for whom she had hoped against hope. The catastrophe she had always dreaded, and which she had averted during many years by a complete self-sacrifice, had overtaken him as soon as she had left him to other guardianship. Ought she then to have remained with him?

Her father's widow was an encumbrance and em-

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barrassment. There was, of course, no provision for her; and none of Diana's brothers and sisters were willing to do anything for Leah, who kept herself out of sight as much as she could, with an instinctive feeling that they all blamed her for the sudden death of their father. When Diana saw her first, she was startled at the paleness of her face, and the traces of long, continuous weeping about her eyes. Justin had sent Leah across to Herford Court to get over the inevitable meeting with his wife, which had been put off from day to day, and she fell down on her knees before Diana.

"Oh, I shall never forgive myself for leavin' him!" cried Leah; "but I thought Master Dick was safe away, and there'd be nobody to come and tempt him. I did my best to be a good wife to him, only it were hard, Miss Di, never to see my own mother, and her frettin' and sendin' me scornful messages, as if I felt myself too grand to go and see her. Can you ever forgive me, Miss Di?"

"I forgive you if there is anything for me to forgive," answered Diana; and moved by a sudden impulse of compassion and grief she stooped and kissed Leah's pale face, which flushed with momentary pleasure. "Get up, Leah," she added, "and sit down here beside me. We have a good deal to talk about. My brother, Captain Lynn, and I are thinking what can be done for you."

"Don't do nothin' for me," she said, earnestly;

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"it's my fault as you are not livin' still with your father, and takin' care of him. I deserve to be punished; and Uncle Fosse and me, we thought you might let me be servant."

"No, no," interrupted Diana; "we must not let our father's widow go into service."

"Listen only a minute," urged Leah; "servant to Master Dick; his nurse, you know. I was afraid you wouldn't, perhaps, let me be, because I know I'm Leah Lynn now—old Squire Lynn's wife. But I'd never call myself by his name, and I'd never, never speak as if I'd belonged to you, if you'd only give your consent to me bein' servant to Master Dick. He'll want somebody faithful now that he'll never set his foot to the floor again; and I'd rather wait on him than be the finest lady in the land. It will be a hard thing to have old Mrs. Herford for a mistress, after I've been on a level with her, and been her visitor, and I know she'll make it as bad as bad can be; but I'll put up with it, I will indeed, Miss Di. Master Justin, he'd be satisfied his poor brother was well done by, as long as I was about him."

"I'm sure he would be, Leah," said Diana.

"He groans and mourns all day long, and all night too," continued Leah, with tears in her eyes; "it almost breaks my heart to hear him. 'Oh, God! oh, God!' he cries, hundreds and hundreds o' times. And I'm no scholar like you; and I'm not in favor wi' God, like Uncle Fosse. He isn't any scholar, but

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he speaks as if God told him the very words he ought to say. I never know what to say to Master Dick, and I can do nothin' to comfort him, only smoothin' his pillow and fetchin' him somethin' to eat or drink. If you'd come and see him! He thinks all the world o' you."

"I'll come gladly," replied Diana.

"I know I'm nothin' better than a common servant-girl," said Leah humbly; "and he only used to make game o' me; so it 'ud be no use me sayin' anythin', even if I knew how. But you're a lady, and he thinks all the world o' you."

It cost Leah a pang to own this in so many words. Though she had risked her life for Richard Herford, and was willing to devote it to his service, he thought nothing of her; whilst he thought all the world of Diana, who had never given to him a moment's care. She could not explain it to herself. Richard Herford had never been like Justin, who seemed to belong altogether to another sphere than hers. Richard had always chosen to associate with people like himself. Then how was it that he could think so much of Diana, and find merely a subject of ridicule in her own devotion and love to him?

"And oh! Miss Di," she continued, "his mother can't comfort him, no more than me. She sits, and cries, and wails by his bedside, and never says a word to cheer him up. 'We shall have to live all the rest of our days in this hole,' she says; 'there's no more

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company for us, and no pleasure in life. I'm a miserable woman,' she says. Sometimes Master Dick pretends to be asleep, when he hears her come in. 'Leah,' he said, last night, 'what have I done to bring my father's curses on me? Justin says he took them off before he died, but they've overtaken me all the same. I made him miserable, and now I'm miserable. Even my mother looks on me as a burden.' 'You're no burden to me, Master Dick,' I said; 'I love to wait on you.' But it was no good; he only groaned deeper than ever; and I heard him callin', 'Oh, God! oh, God!' like a child that's lost its way and is callin' for its mother."

Leah hid her face in her hands, weeping bitterly; and Diana wept too. It was pitiful to them both to think of Richard Herford suddenly struck down in his full vigor; but Diana's grief and pity were nothing to Leah's.

"What I want to ask," resumed Leah, "is to be only his nurse, Leah Dart, just as if I'd never called myself anythin' else. I know you and Captain Lynn and the rest have a right to settle what I ought to do, because I was your father's wife; but folks will forget all that by-and-by. It was a silly blunder o' mine, and I'm rightly punished for it. I'm young and strong, and I might take care o' Master Dick as long as he lives. Oh, my dear Miss Di, he'll need somebody very true and patient to take care of him. The doctors say by-and-by, maybe not for some

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years yet, but the mischief 'll creep up to his head, and he'll be quite silly, like a poor idiot. He'll need somebody to love him very faithful, then; and there's nobody in the world but me. Other folks might be cruel to him; and it breaks my heart already to think he might be badly dealt by. Perhaps it's the work God has set for me; I'd like to think it was, it 'd be so kind of Him. If I could only fancy God was sayin', 'Leah, you take care of this poor Master Dick for Me,' I could keep on for hundreds o' years. That 'ud give me all the help I want."

"Leah," said Diana, taking her large red hand between her own, "I believe God has set you this work to do. It will be a great sacrifice for you, my poor girl; but I believe you can do it. Yes; you shall take care of him if you will."

"You'll let me be Master Dick's servant!" exclaimed Leah.

"With all my heart; it's a noble thing to do," answered Diana. "Did you never hear what Jesus said, 'Whosoever is chief among you, let him be your servant; even as the Son of Man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give His life a ransom for many? You are choosing wisely now, Leah."

"I don't know much about Him," she said, with kindling eyes, "but it's somethin' like what Uncle Fosse says. Do you mean that Jesus Christ was like a servant, a real servant, doing real work that

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was beneath Him? Not makin' believe to work like grand folks do. I never thought of that before. I wish I had before I began to wish to be a lady. I'll think about that when I grow tired and low. And I'll keep myself under to Mrs. Herford, however aggravatin' she is. If I could only be a right good woman at last I'd put up with anythin'. Jesus Christ doin' real work that was beneath Him! Oh, Miss Di, what a foolish woman I have been!"

Leah went back to Rillage Grange with a lightened heart. She knew very well that a dreary life lay before her; and that the service she had entered upon would be a hard one. Not for her would there be any of the common joys and sorrows of her own class; no small, quiet home of her own; neither husband nor child. She had forfeited all these; and in their place was allotted to her a life of constant care and weariness; sleepless nights and anxious days. Yet she felt glad, she hardly knew why. Her path by the cliffs led her past the almost hidden cove where she had faced death while choosing to remain faithful to Richard Herford. With slow and cautious steps she felt her way to the summit of the precipice, and lying down stretched her head over the edge to catch a glimpse of the strip of sand far below her. The waves were running in upon it, curling and rippling in the sunshine, as if playing with one another; but none the less steadily creeping over it, and stealthily filling up all means of escape

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from it. If she had forsaken her charge, and left Richard Herford there in his unconsciousness, death would have been certain. Thank God! she had kept true.

But as Leah went on her way, slowly and thoughtfully, it seemed to her that the doom stealthily creeping onwards upon Richard Herford was like the treacherous tide she had been gazing on from the perilous standpoint. Slowly it might come, but there was no escape from it. No love or pity could save him. It would be her lot to watch its inroads and encroachments; to sit by and see him sinking into helpless imbecility. For the hours she had waited under the cliffs for deliverance, there would be years to wait for the only deliverance that could come to release Richard Herford. Could she remain all those years beside him?

"God keep me true!" cried Leah in her inmost heart.

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CHAPTER XLVII.

A HIRED SERVANT.

IT was several weeks before Diana could gather courage and strength sufficient to revisit her old home. The shock of her father's death had been too great and too sudden for her to rally quickly from the blow. The dreary circumstances attending it preyed upon her spirits; and Justin, who was compelled by the duties of his secretaryship to leave Herford for days together, would not listen to any project of her visiting Rillage Grange and his brother Richard until she had recovered in a measure her natural balance.

Justin was fully awake to the difficulties of his own and his brother's position, with regard to each other and to the estate. There was no hope of even a partial recovery for Richard from the fatal injury to the spine, which reduced him to the state of a helpless and bedridden cripple. How many years he might linger on in this condition would be due to the manner in which he bore his terrible doom, and to the faithfulness of his nurse and attendants. Yet

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he was the owner of Herford, and had a clear right to dispose of it as he chose. No doubt, at present, he fully intended to bequeath it to Justin; but there was nothing to prevent him, in the future, from leaving it to any stranger who might seek to gain an undue influence over his weakened brain. Richard must fall more and more under the impulses of mere caprice and whim; and as his mind grew feebler his passions would grow stronger. There must be to the end an utter uncertainty of succeeding to his possessions.

Yet the estate needed a master. Already, during the twelve months since Justin had given it up, affairs had fallen into some disorder. His quick eye discerned it as he rode over the farm attached to Herford Court, and inquired into the progress of the trade he had started by the coasting craft, which had succeeded so well under his own direction. There had not been time for any serious neglect or falling off; but there was the beginning of it to be detected everywhere. It annoyed Justin, as it annoys every man whose heart is in his work, to see that on which he has bestowed much labor and thought falling into decay and ruin. Now that Richard was absolutely disabled, though he could not ruin himself and his estate by reckless extravagances, neither could he look after his own affairs at all. Henceforth he must see only through the eyes of another man, issue his orders through another

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man's mouth, and leave everything in another man's hands.

Justin's love for Herford was too deeply rooted ever to be altogether eradicated. He had entered heartily into his new work, and enjoyed it with the vigor and healthy enjoyment of a man who feels that he is living a conscientious and useful life. But in Herford he felt that the prosperity and peace of the whole place was in a great measure due to himself, and dependent upon him. His friendship for many of the homely fishermen was as true a friendship as can exist between man and man. It had been very pleasant to him to dwell among them, as he had done, in an almost patriarchal fashion; their head and leader; the chieftain whom they were all willing to follow loyally. There were many life-long ties uniting them to him, and him to them. It had been a grievous thing to him to leave them to Richard; it was hardly less grievous to think of them being left to the direction of a hireling.

Slowly the project formed itself in his mind to come back to Herford as Richard's bailiff. This meant to be a servant where he had been master; a servant to an imperious and capricious employer. He would not be Herford of Herford. Richard had resented his change of name, and refused to call him by the family surname; and though he had retained it as being better known by it than by his old name, it was possible that Richard would persist in calling him by

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the latter. Continual vexations and mortifications would beset him. There would be nothing to gain for himself, but very much for Richard, for Herford, and the people who had been his care during so many years.

His post in London could be filled up immediately by scores of men as well qualified for its duties as himself. But who else could fill this post as he could? His love for Herford and his regard for its interests had pleaded strongly on the wrong side, in those sharp and bitter conflicts which had preceded his resignation of the estate to his half-brother. All the weight these considerations had had then ought to influence him now. If he could serve God and man better at Herford than elsewhere, it was his duty to trample under foot any mere dread of encountering vexations and mortifications. Was he not called upon to "consider Him who endured such contradictions of sinners against Himself," and not to be weary and faint in his mind? "It is enough for the disciple that he be as the master, and the servant as his lord."

There was the Rillage estate too; the lands belonging to Diana's brother, lying side by side with the Herford estate. Captain Lynn, the heir, could not live upon it, and he was already seeking an agent to take it into his hands. Justin had often revolved schemes in his mind for developing the natural resources of his neighbors' lands, and from time to time

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had tried to arouse old Squire Lynn to some energy. It would not be too much to take charge of both Herford and Rillage. There would be no magisterial duties to discharge; and the claims of society upon him would be few when he was known to be no longer the owner, but the bailiff of Herford. Why should he not be his brother's bailiff? Every day that he was at Herford Court he crossed the cliffs to Rillage Grange, to spend some time with him and strengthen and comfort him under the great calamity that had overwhelmed him. There was a pathetic helplessness about Richard that touched the deepest chord of brotherhood in Justin's nature. He thought of his mother, too, querulous and unhappy, for whom he still cherished half-pitiful, half-chivalrous affection. How was he to leave these two utterly dependent, utterly miserable beings to the care of mere hirelings?

Here, more than anywhere else, he could follow closely the footsteps of his Lord. There was no reputation to be gained, neither dignity nor glory. Ambition must fade away out of his path. If he was to save others he could not save himself.

He had fully, though gradually, made up his mind what he would do, before Diana found courage enough to venture upon going to see Richard in her old home. Her brother, Captain Lynn, the poor heir of the impoverished estate, was with her, as well as Justin, and the three stood looking down upon Rillage Grange,

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from the steep brow of the hill immediately above it. It lay directly below them in the bright sunshine. The decaying roof was picturesque with its tufts of yellow house-leek and stone-crop growing luxuriantly upon it, and the tangled garden looked green and wild. But none the less the light shone pitilessly on ruin and decay. Diana gazed down upon it with bitter sorrow. It had never seemed so dreary and desolate before, and the sight of it after a few months of absence struck her with sudden force. Yet it was her home, and it was dear to her. Her brother, who stood beside her, was looking down on his inheritance with a gloomy and embittered expression.

"It was a pretty place once, and now it's hardly worth an old song," said Captain Lynn; "yet after all, it's mine. The poor old place has belonged to us for centuries almost, and I should not like to lose it. What am I to do with it, Herford?"

"It will be years before you can come to it," answered Justin; "you must nurse your estate for your son. Put it into tolerable repair, and let it on a long lease, that will make it worth while for your tenants to spend money on it."

"Tenants! where shall I find a tenant?" asked Captain Lynn; "a tumble-down, dilapidated old place! And who would bury themselves alive here?"

"I can offer you a tenant as soon as Richard can be taken home," he answered; "would you take Diana and me?"

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"Diana and you!" he repeated.

"Yes," he said; "we have been talking over matters, and Diana and I cannot see anything better to be done than for me to become bailiff for both your estate and Richard's. You are looking out for an agent, but you really need a farming bailiff; and I am better qualified than any one else. The lands on both of them are as well known to me as Diana's face is, and I know how to make the best of them. If you accept my offer we will settle down here as soon as Richard returns to Herford. You can make yourself happy here, Diana?"

"Anywhere with you," she answered, looking up to him through her tears.

"But, good heavens!" exclaimed Captain Lynn, "you a bailiff, Herford!"

"I must be that or a secretary," said Justin smiling; "I can be my own master no longer, with my living to get. I can be anything—anywhere—God with me."

"It would be first-rate for me," resumed Captain Lynn, after a short silence, "and for Dick Herford. We shall be too selfish to say no to it. Diana would be at home again, too, and of course no one would look upon you as a mere bailiff, you know. The estate is certain to come to you sooner or later; and it will be all the better for you in the long run. Dick Herford would be a rascally scoundrel if he left it away from you. You always had a long head, Justin."

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A long head! Justin winced a little at these words. But he had not renounced his ambition with any idea that the world would understand and applaud the sacrifice. What did it matter if the whole world thought he was scheming? God knew he would give all he had to set Richard on his feet again, and see him once more at the head of his own house. Diana knew why he was acting as he had proposed; and surely his brother would know!

They went down into the valley and entered the dreary house. Not a sound was to be heard in any of its rooms, for profound stillness was necessary for Richard Herford. The farm-yard, that lay a field or two away, had been cleared, that no sharp or sudden noise should break the silence. The door was opened and closed again by Justin with great caution, and their footsteps fell softly on the matted floor of the passages. They waited for a few minutes in Diana's sitting-room for Mrs. Herford to come to see them. She entered silently and dejectedly, and greeted them with tears.

"It is like a tomb," she said; "always just like this. We might as well be buried alive. Poor dear Mrs. Cunliffe came to see me yesterday, and Dick declared he could hear her voice through three walls and up a flight of stairs. He sent Leah to tell me I must not ask her to stay to dinner; after that long walk too! She was as much disappointed as I was, but what could we do? She says she can spare

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Jenny to live with me as long as I'm here, and Mr. Cunliffe doesn't object to her coming now; but Richard says no. 'It's not fit for a young girl,' he says; 'it's too gloomy.' Then how can it be fit for me?"

No one appeared able to answer this question, and a short silence followed, broken by Mrs. Herford's sighs.

"Can he see no one?" asked Diana.

"Oh, yes! my brother-in-law Watson is with him now," she said, peevishly; "and he's been to see him a good deal lately, on business, he says; though he never gives me a hint of what it may be. His will, I fancy; and he might ask my opinion, I'm sure. If his poor father had consulted me, we should not have had all these troubles. And old Fosse has been with him. Old Fosse's voice is ten times louder than Mrs. Cunliffe's. He doesn't complain of Leah's voice either. It's only one of his whims, and I'm to be made the slave of them."

"Master Dick's ready to see Mrs. Di and Master Justin," said Leah, opening the door and entering the room a step or two, in her plain black dress and white cap. She curtsied deeply to Captain Lynn, and stood at the door to close it after Justin and Diana, as a servant would do. There was nothing in her manner to denote that she was the mistress of the house or the widow of its late owner. Leah was carrying out her resolve to be nothing more than Richard Herford's servant.

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CHAPTER XLVIII.

RIGHT AT LAST.

TIME seemed to be standing still for Richard Herford; he measured it no longer by days, and weeks, and months. It might have been years already since he awoke to consciousness to find himself a prisoner within the four walls of the room, which he was powerless to quit. He could not even reach the window to catch a moment's glimpse of the sky and cliffs. To all about him the calamity that had befallen him was yet new and recent; to himself it felt to be centuries old. It had happened so long since that all his former life had withdrawn into a past, spent and ended ages ago. Childhood and boyhood and manhood were all blended into one distant phase of beauty and gladness; for he was a man no longer, he said to himself in bitterness. There was no perspective in his past life. The great gulf which lay between it and the present, set it so far apart from him that all its long line of years were concentrated into a single point. He had lived; he was living no longer.

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"How long is it, Leah, how long is it?" he asked frequently; and when she told him it was yet only so many days or weeks since he had set his sails to the wind and felt the salt spray on his face, he listened in mute anguish. Was it not rather centuries? thousands of years? There were no terms broad enough to express the endlessness of the period which separated him from the common months and years of common life. Henceforth there would be no change of seasons for him; nothing but the slow swinging of the hours from light to darkness, and from darkness to light; and even that with no sight of the sun by day, or of the moon and stars by night.

"Justin," he said, one morning, "would to God I'd been drowned with old Lynn! It would have been better for us both; and you'd have been Herford of Herford again."

Herford of Herford! He could not be that himself; he was no man, but a mere log and cumberer of the ground. What was Herford to him? He would never more ride over his fields, or hoist his sails, or welcome his old comrades to his open house. There was nothing left to him but to lie as he was, with no gleam of pleasure, except those that came to him through the ministry of Justin, and Diana, and Pansy. Diana had not yot been to see him, but Pansy had insisted upon staying near him, ready to come to his side and talk as cheerily as she knew how, or sing to him quiet, homely country songs in her

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sweet, low voice. Pansy was something lovely and delicate to look at, and her gentle movements soothed him. Justin's daily visits, when he was at Herford Court, were a break in the gloomy monotony of the days. How was he to tide over the days, if these almost endless spells of light could be called days, when they were gone back to London?

If Justin were settled at Herford again, he would make sure of the friendship and constant neighborhood of his brother. His mother and he could stay at Rillage Grange; for what did it matter to him in what dull chamber his log of a body might lie? Leah would live with them; for she had promised never to leave him. With Justin and Diana little more than two miles away, he could reckon on their frequent companionship; and Pansy, little Heartsease, as he called her, might be with him almost constantly. How could he make sure of having them all about him?

Justin could not live at Herford without a sufficient income to keep it up; and if he had the income of the estate, it would be better for him to have the estate itself, with all the power and influence it carried with it. Richard cared for money only so far as it procured him personal enjoyment. There had always been a vein of reckless liberality in his temperament, which had hitherto taken the form of lavish expenditure, by no means incompatible with selfish disregard to the claims of others. As long as he could fritter

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away his means upon pleasure, he had found it impossible to spare any for other purposes. But his pleasures were ended forever; and as he could no longer use his money himself, he was willing to give it over into the hands of others. He had no love of mere accumulation.

His Uncle Watson, whom he consulted, assured him that he could not execute a will, making Justin his heir, which he would not have power himself to revoke, as long as he was of sound mind in the eye of the law. Richard knew that he dare not trust himself, and his capricious humor; and he was equally sure that Justin could not trust him. In any hour of pique and resentment, he might disinherit his brother, and give over his old family estate to a stranger. Justin had already made the name of Herford of Herford better known and more honored in the county than it had ever been; and it was in Richard's power to reinstate him. If Justin were made absolute master again, it would set him free to act as he chose, which would be impossible if he were merely his brother's heir, waiting for his death.

Richard turned the scheme over in his own mind, and talked of it to Leah, and old Fosse, cautiously at first, but with increasing pleasure every time he spoke of it. He would retain a good income for himself; but the bulk of the property should be made over to Justin again. Mr. Watson approved of the plan heartily. He had always been proud of his nephew

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Justin, though Dick had been his favorite; and to see the former Herford of Herford once more, and immediately, gratified his pride. Each one of his three counsellors encouraged Richard in his design.

Mr. Watson and he were discussing the preliminary arrangements when Richard was told that Diana had at last revisited her old home in order to see him. But though Justin and Pansy had described his condition to her, Diana was taken by surprise when she saw the change that had passed over him. She was deeply agitated herself, for he was occupying her father's bedroom, and was lying on his bed utterly helpless, save for the feeble movement of the hand stretched out to her as she approached him. His face was pale and worn, but it was more like Justin's than it had been before; and his eyes looked up earnestly to hers, with a pathetic mournfulness of appeal in them. Diana bent over him, and laid her lips gently upon his forehead, whilst her hand returned the faint pressure of his nerveless fingers.

"Thank you, Diana; God bless you!" he exclaimed. He had known her, and almost worshipped her from his boyhood, and the tears started into his eyes as he looked up into her pitying face.

"I would do anything for you," she said eagerly; "Justin and I will do anything in the world. You are our brother. There is nothing we are not ready to give up to comfort and help you."

"I am sure of it," he answered.

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"Yes," she continued, stroking back the heavy hair from his hot forehead with her cool, caressing fingers, "I shall often be with you now. You shall not be left alone. Justin and I have agreed that he shall be your steward and bailiff, to carry out your orders and attend to your interests; and as much as I can, I will be your nurse. Justin is fit to be a king," said Diana, glancing round proudly at her husband, "but he will take the place of a servant to you, to take care of you, and your estate, and your people. You will know now that he is a good man; that he did not take your place to wrong you. As soon as you came back he gave up all to you of his own free will. My husband has always been a good, true man."

"Yes, I know it," said Richard, with a faint smile.

"Diana is in a hurry to tell you our plans," said Justin; "but you can think it over, Dick. Herford and Rillage will want somebody to take care of them, and they are no more than I can manage well. Between you, you can pay me a fair salary, and Diana and I can live here after you are gone home again. I should be close to you, and should see you almost every day; you would be sure of having Diana and Pansy often. I think you will find it very much to your interest, when you come to look at it quietly."

"It's a good plan," interposed Mr. Watson, abruptly and eagerly, lest Justin's proposal should turn Richard from his purpose; "but Dick's plan is ten

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times better. Sit down, my dear," he said, placing a chair for Diana; "sit down, and let Richard tell you what he has proposed to do."

A short silence fell upon them. Diana felt a little chill of disappointment, as if Justin's magnanimous sacrifice of his own interests was being undervalued, and her clear dark eyes were fixed upon Richard's face inquiringly. He could not keep silence under their grave scrutiny.

"How long will it be before I could be taken home?" he asked, in the languid tones of pain.

"Months, perhaps," answered Justin.

"Months?" he said mournfully. "No, never, till I am carried out dead. I may as well live here as anywhere else, if you call this living. Why should I undergo the agony of being moved? I'm not so fond of Herford that I want to die where my poor old father died. I should think of his curses more at Herford than here. No; leave me in peace here; I'll never go back to Herford Court."

"Who will live there, then?" asked Justin.

"You and Diana and your children," replied Richard. "I'm not a dog in the manger, to keep what I can never enjoy. God knows you are best fitted to be Herford of Herford, and I'm going to give it up to you again."

"No, no!" interrupted Justin.

"Hold your tongue, Justin!" cried Mr. Watson; "Dick's in the right. You're not to be the only one

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to do a noble thing. Go on, Dick, my boy. It's a grand thing to do; a noble, first-rate thing. You'll think of it many a time after it's done, and be glad and proud that you did it."

This little draught of praise acted as a stimulant to Richard's resolution. He met Diana's earnest gaze with a smile, and spoke again with a stronger voice.

"I shall be glad to think of you both living at Herford Court," he said; "and, Justin, I'm about to make over almost all to you. They say—Leah told me, and if it's not true you can say so—that the longer I live the weaker my brain will grow. It's an awful thing to think of. There will come a time when I might be foolish enough to do a rascally thing—such as leaving my lands away from you. Let me do a grand thing now, while I can. Perhaps God will let it be some atonement. It will be better for my soul, than if I kept all in my own hands."

"I cannot say anything now," answered Justin, "but it is a grand thing for you to do. Dick, my boy, I'd give worlds to have you my little brother again, and see you grow up master of Herford. I would do more than I did to help you to be good and true. Would to God, one could recall the past!"

"Old Fosse is eager for it," continued Richard, "and Uncle Watson approves of it. What can I do with lands and money? Let me have you and Diana and Pansy always near me; it is the only comfort I can have now. You shall call your eldest son

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Richard; and there will be a better Dick Herford than I could ever have been. You cannot say anything but yes to it, Justin."

But Justin was in no haste to bring the question to a conclusion. He insisted upon Richard taking three months longer to consider his purpose, and to take the highest opinion as to the possibility of his future recovery. He had no desire to snatch hastily again the prize for which he had once forfeited his integrity.

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CHAPTER XLIX.

A GRAY DAY.

THERE was universal joy in Herford when it was announced that Justin was coming back to the Court as its actual owner. The circumstances of his reinstatement did not admit of any outward demonstrations of rejoicing; but the congratulations offered to him were fervent and deep. Old Fosse was triumphant in his thanksgivings. Philip Cunliffe felt as profound a joy as any one in welcoming back his friend; and Mrs. Cunliffe expressed her rapture of delight, in terms as enthusiastic as if she had not tasted a moment's happiness since she had lost sight of Justin and Pansy. It was autumn before Justin would finally accept the settlement Richard was prepared to make, and before he found himself once more Herford of Herford. But already he had resumed his old life, as if he had never quitted it. The former routine, full of pleasant and congenial occupation to him, had closed round him, and filled up his days and weeks. There was only one change in his home; Diana was in the place of his mother, at the head of his house.

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Had he, then, paid the full penalty for his old transgression? All the world was ready to forget it, and blot it out of remembrance, now he was back again in his old sphere. In a little while it would cease to note that Richard had been Herford of Herford for the space of one short year. Had the dead past buried its dead?

That which hurts us most in life is, that there is no retracing of our steps, no calling back of the fugitive hours, no possibility of undoing that which is once done. Every sin has an immortal existence. Forgiven it may be, and forgotten for a while. But it can never be with us as it would have been had that sin never been born. It meets us again and again through life; whispers to us in quiet moments; looks across the years to us with its pale, sad face, and in unexpected ways reminds us that it is ours; it belongs to us. It is the lie our own lips spoke; the wrong our own hearts were guilty of. Eternity itself, heaven itself, cannot set straight that crooked line.

Sometimes still, when Justin met his friend Philip Cunliffe, tranquilly and contentedly trudging on foot, in any weather, to some distant corner in his parish, for no other purpose than to visit some sick old woman or look after a truant child, it filled his mind with thoughts as to how it would have been with himself had he remained the vicar of Herford, and continued to dwell in the little vicarage, with Pansy growing up beside him. If he had explained the mistake that

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had been made in burning his stepfather's will, Richard would have come home and entered at once upon his inheritance; and he would have been nothing else, if he remained in Herford, than its poor vicar. He was the squire now, rightfully and securely. Had he given too high a price for his possessions?

The payment was not to be remitted, because he had at last retraced his steps into the narrow pathway of integrity. There was a sleeping dread in the deepest recesses of his heart, that he had still the heaviest portion of his penalty to bear. He talked and looked and acted as a man free from anxiety; yet he was conscious of a lurking anxiety which he dared not face. He was more fully occupied than ever; but in the midst of all his occupations he kept an almost stealthy watch over Pansy, marking every change in her face, and listening to every word she spoke.

Justin's love for his daughter was something apart from all other love. She had been born whilst he was still in his earliest manhood; when he had no one else to love, after his first hasty, boyish marriage had proved a mistake and blunder. Her mother's death had thrown the child in utter dependence upon his care; and every stage of Pansy's life stood fresh and clear in his memory. He could recall a hundred images of her to his mind. When his eyes rested upon her changed face, he recollected the rosy, merry girl, who had filled the old rooms of the Court with innocent fun and frolic; the questioning little child, with

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the shrewd curiosity of childhood, running at his side through the village street; the small, helpless baby lying in his arms, or sleeping in her cradle on his study hearth. She represented every phase of childhood and girlhood to him; and his love for her was woven through and through the tissue of his life.

It was quite evident that Pansy was not regaining her former bloom and strength in her native air. She spent a large portion of her time at Rillage Grange, as if she chose the stillness and the gloom there, in preference to her old home under its changed aspects. Before long the walk over the cliffs proved too rough and fatiguing for her; and Justin was obliged to drive her round by the road, and leave her with his mother when the weather was unsettled. He began to miss her from his home often enough to feel what a blank would be there, if she were gone never to return. It was plain that it was no longer homesickness that preyed upon her.

Mrs. Cunliffe had at last found a suitable situation for Jenny, as governess in Sir Robert Fortescue's family; and she was never weary of retailing any little piece of news which came to her in Jenny's letters. Pansy, who had no other chance of hearing the Fortescues mentioned, sometimes listened with eager intentness, and sometimes fled away to the refuge of her old room, empty of its poor and trifling treasures, which had been swept away by her grandmother, as soon as she and Justin had quitted Herford Court.

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"Jenny tells me quite a secret," said Mrs. Cunliffe one morning to Diana and Pansy; "it is a secret at present, but of course it will not be so very long; so I shall betray no confidence by mentioning it to you. Mr. Robert Fortescue is your cousin-german, I believe; your first cousin's son? If I am wrong you must kindly set me right, dear Mrs. Herford."

"You are not wrong," answered Diana, coldly; "but I have never seen much of them."

"Still you are the same family," continued Mrs. Cunliffe, "and they speak most kindly of you. Lady Fortescue asked Jenny how dear Pansy was the other day; and spoke of having seen her in London, when she made her debut there. Very likely you saw Mr. Robert Fortescue in London, Pansy?"

"Yes," she answered, her heart beating fast and painfully.

"An exceedingly fine young man, Jenny says," pursued Mrs. Cunliffe, "and only four-and-twenty. He is about to make a most excellent match; quite a wealthy alliance with the only child of a London banker. All the family are exceedingly pleased; but you must not mention it to any living creature, for fear of bringing my poor Jenny into trouble."

"I shall never speak of it," said Pansy, rising abruptly from her chair. The color flushed to her pale cheeks, and deepened into crimson as she met Diana's eyes. She crossed over to the sofa on which her stepmother was lying, and kissed her tenderly.

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"I'm going away to old Fosse," she whispered; "don't let Mrs. Cunliffe come with me."

"Mrs. Cunliffe will stay with me," said Diana aloud, "and, Pansy, you call at the Vicarage and bring Mr. Cunliffe back with you to dinner."

It was a gray day of autumn, with no break in the clouds, and no gleam of sunshine upon the sea. All the brightness seemed to have fled from the earth; and the green fields themselves looked dark and dull. The little village street, and the beach, and the strip of sand, were gathered into the same gloom. It was not cold, but Pansy shivered and trembled as, she drew her cloak round her. She saw old Fosse at work in his garden, but she hurried swiftly past. If she could but bear up calmly till she was out of sight of every one, she might give way to her sorrow and anguish, when she was on the solitary rocks beneath the lighthouse.

Her girlish face wore an air of gray despair as she sped along the rough and narrow track. She felt no fatigue; and the chill that made her shiver was not in the westerly wind. But as she turned the sharp corner of the Lantern rock, beyond which she expected to be alone and unseen, she started to see the stone bench occupied by her father.

Justin's face was gray and sad like her own. He had heard that morning the news which he knew would pierce his daughter's heart; and he had come to this spot to think over how he should break it to

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her. They stood looking at one another for a minute, and then, with a low, heart-broken cry, Pansy ran to him and flung herself upon his breast.

"Father!" she cried, "father!"

"My darling!" he said.

"Am I very wicked?" she sobbed. "I thought it would all come right somehow—and now it can never be right. Diana is very happy; she never loved any one but you. Why did anybody ever think I should be rich, and have Herford for my own? Father, I've lost everything."

"You have not lost me," he answered.

"Yes, I've lost you," she said vehemently, "I never thought there would be any one before me with you; and I grew up so. Oh! I am very wicked. Everything is changed or gone. I am living in a dream—a bad dream. There is Herford, and the same houses, and the same people; and yet they are all altered. They can never, never be the same as they used to be. You did not bring me up to bear with trouble, did you, father? And yet trouble will come."

"My darling! what can I do for you?" he asked.

"Nothing," she answered, "nothing; there is nothing can be done. Would you be very sorry if I died? I should choose to die, if you would not grieve too much."

"Pansy," he said, "it would well nigh break my heart."

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She lifted up her head, and looked at him with a brighter gleam in her blue eyes. She almost smiled as she gazed at his sorrowful face.

"That comforts me," she said, sighing; "and yet I should be grieved if you were grieved. Father, I have tried to get better, and I cannot. I'm just like a pansy trodden under foot; you could never set it on its poor little stalk again. I thought the whole world was good and beautiful; and all at once I found out how cruel and bad it was. That crushed me down. I never was strong and brave; and when I found everybody was different from what I thought, it killed me. I've never been alive as I used to be since that time."

"Pansy," cried Justin, "if I lose you, my punishment will be more than I can bear."

"No, no," said Pansy, "it's my fault, father. If I only had loved God more He would have given me strength; and He will give you strength to bear it. You will be happy again without me some day. I think of it sometimes, as if I shall be living then, and see it. You will have other children, and they will love you as well as I do. You'll remember me, often and often, when they are looking up into your face, or watching for you coming home. They'll be merry and happy; but I could never be happy again. Oh, father! if I can, I'll come and look at you when you cannot see me. And I'm not going to die directly," she said, smiling through her tears; "we

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can talk about it often before I go. Perhaps God will let me live until your second child is born. But I shall always, always be your first-born; I cannot lose that."

"Oh, my God!" groaned Justin, "give me strength to bear it."

"Amen!" said Pansy, softly, and touching his cheek with her lips as she uttered the word.

They sat together a little while longer, talking no more, but grasping each other's hand fast, and thinking of the days gone by, in silence. At last Justin felt her slight frame shivering again, and he roused himself from his painful revery. The grayness of the day was beginning to sink into the darkness of night; and once more, possibly for the last time, he led his daughter homewards along the familiar pathway, and through the village where she had spent her happy girlhood.

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CHAPTER L.

THE FULL PENALTY.

JUSTIN had at last been brought face to face with his secret dread. It had spoken to him through Pansy's own lips, sounding like an irrevocable doom. He could do nothing to avert it; for Pansy herself was yielding languidly to the grief that had been stealthily sapping her strength. The most skillful physicians of the county, and from London, were called in to prescribe for her, and she listened to their advice with a quiet, submissive smile, promising to do anything that they suggested; but none the less she was fading away from day to day.

It seemed as if she grew eager to gather up all the scattered interests and associations of her short life; for as long as she was strong enough she visited all the cottages and farmsteads about Herford, and spent her time, as she had been used to do, in the little village and on the cliffs and beach. Old Fosse spent long hours with her in her favorite seat under the lighthouse; and Justin sat beside them, for he could hardly bear to have Pansy out of his sight.

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Presently the fancy took possession of her, as the weather kept her more indoors, that she must have her old companion and playfellow, Jenny Cunliffe, to stay with her, as in the days of old. It looked like a caprice, but possibly there was some lurking hope in her heart that at last, before she died, a short spell of love, of repentance and forgiveness, might be given to her; that Robert Fortescue might yet return, if he heard she was dying, for a little while to her side, and bring with him the brief rapture of a reconciliation. She could forgive him so tenderly, if he would only seek forgiveness! Now she was so near the grave, no pride or bitterness mingled with her girlish love for him.

Mrs. Cunliffe demurred greatly about withdrawing Jenny from her situation as governess in Sir Robert Fortescue's household.

"It is so very excellent a position," she said to Diana; "one we cannot expect Providence to offer to us again if we slight it now."

But Philip Cunliffe no sooner heard of Pansy's wish than he started off himself, in his shabbiest black coat, to fetch Jenny to Herford. When Lady Fortescue objected to the inconvenience of suddenly losing her governess, and said she must at once fill up that very desirable post, he assured her that no consideration on earth could prevail upon him, or Jenny, to keep her away from her earliest and dearest friend. Lady Fortescue expressed her hope that Pansy's illness

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would be a short one, and promised to keep the situation open for a fortnight, if Jenny wished to return. There was no chance of her returning in a fortnight, so Jenny lost her first place, and on the whole was not sorry to lose it; though Mrs. Cunliffe did not forbear to bewail it in the ears of Justin and Diana, until she was assured that Jenny should lose nothing by devoting herself to Pansy.

Jenny entered upon her new duties buoyantly, and gossiped and prattled of the doings at Fortescue Hall, as she had been used to do about other subjects ever since Pansy and she had been children together. Pansy herself could not have told whether it was more pain or pleasure to her to hear these details. But to Justin it was almost intolerable pain; and he wondered how Pansy could listen, with her faint, heart-breaking smile, and ask Jenny more questions, in the voice that was growing lower and weaker every day.

"Is it quite settled that Richmond Fortescue is to be married soon?" she was inquiring one day, when Justin entered the room just as she finished her question, and Jenny answered it in her clear, young voice.

"Richmond! His name is Robert, not Richmond, you know. He'll be Sir Robert when his father dies. Oh, yes! they are to be married before Christmas, at the latest. Lady Fortescue is as proud as a peacock about it, and she is making the grandest preparations! But I don't wish them joy. I would'nt have married Mr. Robert, though I have not a penny

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for my fortune. Oh, Pansy! what silly things we used to say about the persons we would marry!"

"Why would you not marry him?" murmured Pansy.

"Why?" said Jenny; "well, you know, we governesses see the other side, the poorer side of human nature. Mr. Robert Fortescue was very pleasant, oh! so pleasant, when it is worth while, and he was on show; but he was not any hero at home. Now your father, or mine, never is on show; so you will hardly understand it. He could be the poorest, meanest, smallest creature to those below him, or to those who could not oppose him. I would never have wasted a crumb of love on such a nature as his —Why, Pansy, what are you crying for?"

"I wish I could get well and strong again!" she sobbed, stretching out her arms to her father and leaning her head against him as he sat down beside her; "but it is too late now!"

It was too late. The fragile little flower, reared so delicately, and uprooted by so fierce and sudden a tempest, could not take root again, even in its native soil. She lost her last hold on life, as soon as she was convinced of the worthlessness of the man she had loved. Until now she had believed that it was no more a fault in his nature than in her own, which had separated them. But she grew more tranquil and happy when she had given up her last feeble hope. All she had known in her childhood were

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gathered about her; her old friends were encircling her with vigilant kindness. Diana gave herself up to ministering to her, aided by her clear, unselfish insight into the heart of the dying girl. As far as it is possible, the loneliness and bitterness of the path leading to the grave were removed for Pansy.

It was a short dark day, late in November, with thick mists hiding the sea, and drifting past the windows in clouds, that Justin found himself watching alone beside Pansy's bed. The room was the one where old Richard Herford had died many years before. It had not happened to Justin to be called upon to witness any death since that one, which had so materially influenced his life. The old carved cabinet, that had contained the dying man's two wills, was standing yet in its ancient place; though the rest of the antique furniture had disappeared long ago. But Justin did not need any outward memento to put him in mind of his last vigil by a death-bed. As he sat where he could watch Pansy's white and quiet face, sleeping peacefully, he could not but recall the old man's withered, troubled aspect, and his gray head tossing from side to side on his pillow. All the past rushed back upon him. He was once more the disappointed, tempted man, into whose hand the coveted possession was thrust by chance. Yet if he could but have looked on to the poignant anguish of this hour, as the final stage of the course into which

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he was drifting, not all the treasures upon earth could have prevailed upon him to enter upon it.

Jenny Cunliffe was spending the day at home, and Diana could not be with Pansy. He was alone with his daughter. Not his only child now, for a son had been born to him a week ago, the heir to the old Herford estates; to bear the name and hold the possessions for which he had paid so high a price. But there was no glow of pride or gladness in his heart. Though he resigned himself to the will of God, and bowed his head submissively to receive this last stroke, there was deep, inevitable, bitter pain in suffering it. For some days past these words had been haunting his brain—"For he that knew his Lord's will, and did it not, shall be beaten with many stripes." Surely he ought to have known his Lord's will, if ambition and covetousness had not blinded him.

"Father!" called Pansy, after a silence long and dreary to him; "father!"

"I am here, Pansy," he answered.

"Are you quite, quite willing to let me go?" she asked softly, "now you have another child?"

"'If it be possible,'" he cried, "'let this cup pass from me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt!'"

"Yes!" she said, "and after the crucifixion came the resurrection; and after the resurrection the ascension; and then the glory. It must always be the cross first, father."

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"Yes, my darling."

"It's only for a little while," sighed Pansy; "no one suffers always. You will learn to be content without me, father. How could you help being happy with Diana, and your other children? I want you to be happy again soon. I asked God to let me stay till baby was born; and see, He has let me live a little while longer, so that you might have both your children together. It is partly my own fault to die so young. Only I felt sick of life, and of this weary world, where everything seems to go wrong; and I did not wish to live. I'm not strong enough for this world, father. Did you never think so?"

"I thought I could shield you from every hardship," he answered.

"Father," she said, "if you could go back to when we came home from London—oh! what a happy time that was!—would you keep your secret still, for my sake? If you had known it would kill me, would you have given up Herford?"

"Yes, Pansy, yes!" he replied; "when I gave myself to God, I gave up all. Not to save you could I have kept my secret any longer. Believe me, I thought of your pain and grief a hundred times more than of my own; but I could not keep my brother out of his inheritance, and yet enter into the kingdom of heaven. If I had foreseen this very hour I should have done the same then."

"Old Fosse told me so," she said, with trembling

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lips; "father, it is a good thing to love God more than all."

"And do you love God more than all?" asked Justin.

"I'm not very clever," said Pansy, "and it seems so far above me; I cannot understand. But of late I've felt as if I could understand how Jesus Christ loves us all. Perhaps he once knew a girl like me, neither strong nor wise; only a poor foolish little thing, spoiled and petted by everybody; and so He knows what I am like, and what I want. He doesn't expect me to be like Diana. He's willing to take me as I am; and He has taken me—how I cannot tell you; but I'm not afraid any longer, and I'm not very sorrowful; and it all seems easy and smooth. I dream sometimes I'm in heaven; and it's something like Herford used to be, with everybody loving me, and everybody true to one another. If every one was only true!" she sighed.

Pansy's thin, blue-veined eyelids fell, and her pale lips closed, as if she was tired of looking up at him and speaking to him. Justin stood beside her, gazing sorrowfully down upon the changed face; but thinking all the while of the other death he had witnessed in this room. The mysteries of the shrouded future were trooping around him again, with their insoluble problems. Pansy was soon to pass away from him, and he could do nothing but watch her till her foot struck against the invisible threshold. When, and

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where, and how would he see his child again? In what far-off, unknown world would he meet once more this gentle and fragile spirit, so intimately bound up with his own?"

"Are you here, father?" she cried suddenly, as if waking from her light slumber in some fear.

"Yes, Pansy," he answered, pressing her hand.

"I wish I had never been anything but a comfort to you," she said wistfully.

"You have always been dearer than my own life to me," he replied. "I cannot love Diana herself more than I have loved you."

"But differently," said Pansy, with a fleeting smile; "there must be differences everywhere, even in loving. Only I did not understand it, and I felt alone. It seemed as if everything was changed. I could not think of Diana as my mother, though I loved her dearly, dearly. It was all strange, and I felt lonely. It was foolish of me to feel lonely."

"My darling!" exclaimed Justin, in a tone of profound grief.

"It was all my fault," she said, lifting her wasted hand to his face, as he bent over her, "and I was really glad you were happy, and I thanked God for it. But it was as if I was shut out, because I was not happy, and you were. It had never been so before. You seemed far away from me, in a sunny place, and I could not any how climb up to the sunshine. I was in a dark, dark cell. At last it was be-

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cause I learned to know more about Jesus Christ and to believe in Him really; it was that brought me out of the darkness. I feel content now, father."

"Content to leave me?" he asked.

"Yes," she murmured; "I should never be good for much again, if I lived longer; I should be nothing but a faded, sad little blossom, that could never be bright and light-hearted, as I used to be. It has all been too hard for me. Father, if you could ever in your life help Richmond, poor, poor fellow, to grow true and good, oh! help him for my sake. You are sure to see him again, often; and then you'll remember your little Pansy, and do all you can for him. His father is not a good man; and Richmond thinks so much of you."

Pansy's voice was very broken and low, as she uttered her short sentences; but her shining eyes looked up eagerly into her father's face.

"I shall remember you," he answered, with some bitterness; "do you think I could ever see him without thinking of my darling?"

"That is enough," she said, in a tone of contentment, as she drew his hand under her head and nestled her thin white cheek upon it; "now I will keep myself quiet. I feel as if I should sleep very soundly to-night, and have nothing to fret about if I awake. Is it almost dark, dear father?"

"Almost," he replied, "for I can hardly see your face. We will have the lamp brought in soon, and I

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will read to you. To-morrow Diana will come to sit with you a little while."

"To-morrow!" she repeated softly, "to-morrow!"

The dim, gray twilight of the misty November evening was fast deepening in the room, and filled all the corners with dark shadows; but the light from the nearest window fell full upon Pansy's dear face, and Justin could still see it lying on her hand, pale and worn, but restful, with closed eyes, as if she was already half asleep. For two or three minutes she lay quite silent and motionless, and then a flush of color spread over her wan cheek, and her blue eyes opened with an air of infinite surprise.

"Can I be dying?" she exclaimed, in a tone of solemn gladness; "it is neither dark nor lonely! Can this be death, father?"

The last word fell from her lips in a low whisper, but her smile of gladness and surprise grew brighter. He felt the trembling pressure of Pansy's fingers, clasping his hand with a grasp more feeble than her baby fingers had been used to hold it when her little feet first trod the rough pathway of life at his side. The next moment Justin knew that God had taken her away into His own keeping.

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CHAPTER LI.

LAST WORDS.

RATHER more than two years after Pansy's death, one bright, sunny day of February, when the winter winds were lulled for a little while, and the sea lay resting after its storms, Mrs. Cunliffe took the cliff-path to Rillage, to pay a visit to Mrs. Herford. A narrow road, yet wide enough for a light pony-carriage, had been made, with much trouble and considerable expense, between Rillage Grange and Herford Court, and daily communications were carried on between them.

Justin never missed finding time to see his brother every day, and it was seldom that Diana failed to do so when the weather was tolerably calm. But Mrs. Cunliffe was not driving; she was walking humbly on her own feet, as became the wife of a poor vicar whose income was too small for his large family. The largeness of their family, and the smallness of their living, were subjects never absent from Mrs. Cunliffe's inner thoughts. For some months after Jenny lost her situation as governess in Sir Robert

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Fortescue's household, her mother did not cease to lament the misfortune loudly and vehemently; and these lamentations were scarcely hushed even when the Bishop's lady engaged Jenny to educate her daughters; for what was the Bishop compared with Sir Robert Fortescue, the senior member for the county, and the largest landowner in their part of it? But this fine, calm, sweet February day Mrs. Cunliffe for once was feeling that her strivings and mournings, her prudence and good management had at last been crowned with success. She was the proud bearer, if proud is the term to use for one so humble, of good news to her old friend, Mrs. Herford.

At Rillage Grange she was ushered into a large, light, cheerful sitting-room adjoining Richard's bedroom. Richard had regained so much of physical strength as to bear being lifted from his bed to a sofa, which could then be rolled into the next apartment; but he had no power to help himself. He lay in the pleasant sunshine of the noonday, an old man in appearance, with gray hair and sunken face. Diana was sitting beside him, and both of them were watching the frolics of Justin's boy, who came often to play for an hour or two in his uncle's sight. Richard's old social nature had not forsaken him, and he enjoyed seeing his quiet room peopled by friendly guests. He could not bear to be alone, and Leah took care that he should never be left in complete

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solitude. She was seldom away from him herself, and she was seated now where he could see her face, and appeal to her in a low voice whenever his memory failed him. For his mind was going, and the first faculty that failed him was the power of remembering slight, unimportant things, lying a little outside of the narrow circle which hems in self. Very few had noticed this beginning of the direful end, but Leah was keenly awake to every change in him, and now she seldom left him herself, and always hastened back if she had been absent for a few hours.

Richard Herford was no longer unhappy. Of late he had fallen into the habit of assuring Justin each day that this was the happiest portion of his life. Now and then he talked of old times to Leah, and expatiated on the adventures and changes of his earlier years; but he looked back upon them as quite apart from himself, a wild career which had nothing to do with the present. A deep gulf lay between him and that past life, and he would not have passed across it if he could. The friendship of Diana and Justin, his own passionate love for the boy who was to be the future Herford of Herford, and above all his sense of reconciliation to God, filled up his heart, and gave to him a fullness of contentment such as he had never dreamed of in that far-off past which was growing more and more dim to his failing brain.

When Mrs. Cunliffe entered the sunny parlor she was very warmly greeted by Mrs. Herford, who was

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feeling neglected and overlooked by Richard and Diana, engrossed as they were by the little child. She was to the full as jealous of her grandson as she had been of Pansy, whose early death she was always bewailing to Justin as the greatest sorrow that had ever befallen her.

"I cannot get the thought of poor Pansy out of my head," she said in a doleful voice as soon as Mrs. Cunliffe was seated; "she was such a sweet, quiet child; the very opposite of Justin's boy. Those that knew them both as children must see an enormous difference. You never heard her make such a noise and racket as little Dick has been making all the morning. And I was twenty years younger then, and could have borne it better. Poor Pansy! we shall never see her like again."

"She was a sweet creature," remarked Mrs. Cunliffe, as Diana carried her boy away; "but, my dear Mrs. Herford, what a Providence it was for the son and heir! Miss Pansy would have wanted a large dowry, you know, and it would have been so much taken out of the estate. Mr. Richard likes to know he will be heir of all."

"Who is that woman?" Richard asked of Leah in a puzzled whisper.

"Mrs. Cunliffe," answered Leah; "you know the parson at Herford? His wife."

"Mrs. Cunliffe!" spoke up Richard, "Justin and I would have Herford drowned in the depths of the sea to have little Heartsease back again."

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"Ah! Mr. Richard," sighed Mrs. Cunliffe, "you do not know what it is to have sons and daughters, and nothing to give them. Nobody knows that better than a poor vicar's wife. Somebody is always wanting something in a family like ours; but you rich folks have everything supplied you before you know you have need of it. Pansy would have been but a poor creature to push her way through the world, as my Jenny has had to do. But I have good news to tell you about Jenny, Mrs. Herford."

"Good news are scarce," said Mrs. Herford, in a tone suggesting much indifference to Jenny and her fortunes.

"You are quite right, dear Mrs. Herford," answered Mrs. Cunliffe, "especially in a little out-of-the-way vicarage like ours. I said so when Jenny's letter came. 'My dear Philip,' I said to my husband, 'now I can be thankful for once!' You'll agree with me when I tell you that Jenny is engaged to be married, with the Bishop's approbation, to one of his own nephews, a remarkably clever young man, with a living worth £600 per annum! That's something to be thankful for."

"Who is Jenny?" whispered Richard, with a shade of trouble on his face. "Do I know her?"

"Dear Miss Pansy's old playfellow," answered Leah. "She was with her when she was ill. And she was the first after me to bid you welcome home. You remember her?"

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"Ay! I recollect now," he said smiling; "what could I do without you, Leah?"

Leah's eyes were turned away from him to her sewing, for she did not wish him to see the tears starting in them, or the inward trouble showing itself on her face. He was growing more and more dependent upon her, but she knew now she could keep true to him to the end, whatever the end might be.

"It's good luck for Jenny," observed Mrs. Herford peevishly. "I'm sure I never had such luck. My first husband was a poor man, and my second husband never thought much of me. Indeed, both of them neglected me, and so did my sons, especially Justin. Whatever he expects his own boy to grow up like, I don't know. He'll find out some day what a serpent's tooth is."

"I must be thinking of a wedding present for Miss Jenny," said Richard, who still delighted in being lavish at times. "Leah tells me she was the first, next to her, to welcome me home. What does a young lady about to be married wish for most? I have no knowledge in such matters."

"Oh! my dear, good Mr. Richard!" cried Mrs. Cunliffe, "any little token of regard would do. Of course," she continued anxiously, "we are poor people, and wedding gifts will be most acceptable, as Jenny is only a vicar's daughter. I dare say it would be a trouble to you to think of a suitable gift, and if you did not mind entrusting me with the money,

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however small it was, I could buy her something she needed, and tell her it was your gift, you know! I've been very near praying for her wedding-dress this morning—it did come into my mind whilst I was saying my prayers—for I don't see where it is to come from, unless she wears simple white muslin, and nobody wears plain white muslin in these days."

"Let the wedding-dress be my present," said Richard with an inward laugh, noticed by no one except Leah Dart.

Mrs. Cunliffe rose in her rapture of gratitude and crossed the room to his side, an expression of reverential transport beaming on her face.

"You're too good, Mr. Richard, too good!" she exclaimed, "you do not know how much it will cost!"

"Never mind the cost," he replied; "send in all the bills to me, and don't be afraid of the cost. All Jenny's wedding finery shall come from me, and Leah shall go and see the wedding, and tell me all about it."

"Jenny shall come to thank you herself," said Mrs. Cunliffe with tears of real joy; "you cannot think how good people are! Your brother Justin gave Philip a hundred pounds towards the expenses; and old Fosse and his wife, who are the only persons beside that know about it, have promised to rear a brood of their famous chickens for poor Jenny. It is so pleasant to receive gratitude from the poor! Mrs.

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Fosse's chickens are as much, perhaps, from her, as Jenny's wedding-dress will be from you. Every one should give according to their means. I shall not tell Mr. Cunliffe, for he is so peculiar, you know. He is a very good man, but he has peculiar notions, and he really believes it is more blessed to give than to receive. Perhaps he would insist upon Jenny refusing your very handsome present."

"Perhaps he might," answered Richard with another inward chuckle.

"Yes," continued Mrs. Cunliffe, somewhat alarmed. "Oh! my dear Mr. Richard, it would double the value of your kindness if you would not mention it to my husband when he comes to see you. He is so very odd. I cannot make him understand how poor we are."

"But he accepted Justin's hundred pounds," said Richard.

"Mr. Justin can do what he pleases with him as with everybody else," she replied. "Philip thinks no more of taking benefits from him than if they came direct from heaven. It was a happy day for Herford when he came back. Oh! Mr. Richard," she continued in a tone of vexation and dismay, "I'd forgotten who I was talking to. Of course we'd rather have the rightful heir among us; but after you there's nobody like him."

"I thank God daily that Justin is at Herford," said Richard gravely. He closed his eyes, as if weary

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with talking, and Mrs. Cunliffe crept out of the room, silent and cast down, with many an uneasy qualm lest he should retract his promise, or mention it to her husband. But as neither of these hindrances occurred, she provided for Jenny a handsome and becoming dress, which helped to make her wedding the prettiest that had ever been celebrated in Herford church.

The bishop was present, but it was Justin who pronounced the benediction. It was a day full of mournful memories, and of suggestions of what might have been. Pansy's marble tablet shone new and white among the gray old monuments of the Herfords and the Lynns, erected in the chancel now filled with wedding guests. What was it to him that he was Herford of Herford, whilst his first-born child had been the price paid for his ambition? He saw Diana gazing at him, with deep, wifely sympathy and tenderness in her dark eyes; and his heart blessed her for it, but it was no less sad and troubled. When all was over, and he could separate himself from the other guests, he made his way alone to the bench under the lighthouse, and sat down there, his face buried in his hands, thinking.

He had entered in at the strait gate; he had gone through the needle's eye; and how strait and narrow it was, none knew better than he. His feet were treading the highway through the wilderness, whereon the ransomed of the Lord walk. The kingdom of

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God was within him. There might be sadness, but there was no bitterness in the memory of Pansy. He would not have exchanged this hour, with all its sorrow, for any hour of his prosperous, untroubled life, before he had given himself up to God. There was a true righteousness, a profound peace, an inward blessedness of spirit, which had not entered into his mind to conceive of in those days. He did not love his wife and child and lands less; but he loved God more.

THE END.

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